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THE CANDIDATE: A
POLITICAL ROMANCE

Joseph Altsheler

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Joseph A. Altsheler

The Candidate: A Political Romance

I

THE NOMINEE

The huge convention-hall still rang with the thunders of applause, and most of the delegates were on their feet shouting or waving their hats, when Harley slipped from his desk and made his way quietly to the little side-door leading from the stage. It was all over now but the noise; after a long and desperate fight Grayson, a young lawyer, with little more than a local reputation, had been nominated by his party for the Presidency of the United States, and Harley, alert, eager, and fond of dramatic effects, intended to be the first who should tell him the surprising fact.

He paused a moment, with his hand on the door, and, looking out upon the hall with its multitude of hot, excited faces, ran quickly over the events of the last three or four days. Ten thousand people had sat there, hour after hour, waiting for the result, and now the result had come. The rival parties had entered their conventions, full of doubt and apprehension. There was a singular dearth of great men; the old ones were all dead or disabled, and the new ones had not appeared; the nation was conscious, too, of a new feeling, and all were bound to recognize it; the sense of dependency upon the Old World in certain matters which applied to the mental state rather than anything material was almost gone; the democracy had grown more democratic and the republic was more republican; within the nation itself the West was taking a greater prominence, and the East did not begrudge it. It was felt by everybody in either party that it would be wiser to nominate a Western man, and, the first having done so, the second, as all knew it must, now followed the good example.

Moreover, both conventions had nominated "dark horses," but the second nominee was the "darker" of the two. James Madison Grayson, affectionately called Jimmy Grayson by his neighbors and admirers, was quite young, without a gray hair in his head, tall, powerfully built, smooth-shaven, and with honest eyes that gazed straight into yours. He was known as a brave man, with fine oratorical powers and a winning personality, but he had come to the convention merely as a delegate, and without any thought of securing the nomination for himself. Not a single vote had been instructed for him, but in that lay his opportunity. All the conspicuous candidates were weak; good men in themselves, a solid political objection could be raised against every one of them, and for a while the voting was scattered and desultory. Then Grayson began to attract attention; as a delegate he had spoken two or three times, always briefly, but with grace and to the point, and the people were glad both to see him and to hear him.

At last a far-sighted old man from the same state knew that the moment had come when the convention, staggering about in the dark, could be led easily along any road that seemed the path of light. He mentioned the name of Grayson, putting it forward mildly as a suggestion that he would withdraw at the first opposition, but his very mildness warded off attack. Received rather lightly at first, the suggestion soon made a strong appeal to the delegates. Nothing could be urged against Grayson; he was quite young, it was true, but youth was needed to make a great campaign—the odds were heavily in favor of the other party. Nor were there lacking those who, expecting defeat, said that a young man could bear it better than an old one, and a beating now might train him for a victory four years hence.

Grayson himself was surprised when he heard the report, nor could he ever be convinced that he would be nominated; he regarded the whole thing as absurd, a few votes, no more, might be cast for him, but, as was fit and decent, he withdrew from the hall. All those whose names were before

the convention were expected to remain at home or elsewhere in the city, and Jimmy Grayson and his wife stayed quietly in their rooms at the hotel.

Harley had believed this evening that the nomination of Grayson was at hand. It was an intuitive sense, a sort of premonition that the battalions were closing in for the final conflict, and he did not doubt the result. He had just returned from a war on the other side of the world, where he had been present as the correspondent of a great New York journal on many battle-fields, and he often noticed this strained, breathless feeling that the moment had come, just before the combat was joined. Now this convention-hall was none the less a battle-field though the weapons were ballots, not bullets, and Harley believed in his intuition. At midnight the flood-tide swept in, bearing Grayson on its crest, and, when they saw that he was the man, everybody flocked to him, making the nomination unanimous by a rising vote.

Harley now stood a moment at the door, listening to the cheers as they swelled again, then he stepped out and ran swiftly down the street. A fat policeman, taking him for a fleeing pickpocket, shouted to him to stop, but he flitted by and was gone.

It was only two or three blocks to the hotel, where Mr. Grayson sat quietly in his room, and Harley was running swiftly, but in the minute or two that elapsed much passed through his mind. After his long stay abroad he had returned with a renewed sense, not alone of the power and might of his own country, but also of its goodness; it was here, and here alone, that all careers were open to all; nowhere else in the world could a relatively obscure young lawyer have been put forward, and peacefully, too, for the headship of ninety million people. It was this thought that thrilled him, and it was why he wished to be the first who should tell the young lawyer of it. He had made the acquaintance of Jimmy Grayson the day before; the two had talked for a while about public questions, and each had felt that it was the beginning of a friendship, so he had no hesitation now in making himself an unannounced herald.

He ran into the hotel, darted up the stairway—Jimmy Grayson's rooms were on the first floor—and knocked at the door of the nominee. A light shone from the transom, and he heard a quick, strong step approaching. Then the door was thrown open by Mr. Grayson himself, and Mrs. Grayson, who stood in the centre of the room, looked with inquiry at the correspondent.

"Why, Mr. Harley, I'm glad to see you," said Mr. Grayson, with a welcoming tone in his voice. "Come in, but I warn you that you cannot interview me any further I'm not worth it; I've told you all I know."

Harley said nothing, but stepped into the room, closing the door behind him. He saw that they yet knew nothing—there had been no messenger, no telephone call, and the news was his to tell. He bowed to Mrs. Grayson, and then he felt a moment of embarrassment, but his long experience and natural poise came quickly to his aid.

"I do want to interview you, Mr. Grayson," he said, quietly; "and it is upon a subject to which we did not allude in our former talk."

Mr. Grayson glanced at his wife, and her look, replying to his, indicated the same puzzling state. Both knew that the chief correspondent of one of the greatest journals in the world would not leave a Presidential convention in the hour of birth to secure an irrelevant interview.

"If I can serve you, Mr. Harley, I shall be glad to do so," said Jimmy Grayson, somewhat dryly; "but I really do not see how I can."

"I am quite sure that you can," said Harley, with emphasis.

He listened a moment, but he did not hear any step in the hall nor the jingling of any telephone bell. Both Mr. and Mrs. Grayson waited expectantly, curious to see what he had in mind.

"If you were to be nominated for the Presidency, I should like to tell the *Gazette* what your programme would be—that is, what sort of a campaign you would conduct," said Harley, deliberately.

Mr. Grayson laughed and glanced again at his wife.

"It is a wise rule for a man in public life never to answer hypothetical questions; of that I am sure, Mr. Harley," he said.

"I am sure of it, too," said Harley.

Jimmy Grayson bit his lip. It seemed to him that the correspondent would make a jest, and the hour was unfitting.

"I shall answer your question when I am nominated," he said.

"Then you will answer it now," said Harley.

A sudden flush passed over Mr. Grayson's face and left it white. Mrs. Grayson trembled and glanced again at her husband, still in a puzzled state.

"Your meaning is not clear, Mr. Harley," he said.

"It should be. When I left the convention-hall, two minutes ago, they had just made the nomination unanimous. I wished to be the first to tell the news, and I have had my wish."

The eyes of the nominee looked straight into those of Harley, but the correspondent did not flinch. It was obvious that he was telling the truth.

"The notifying committee will be here in a few minutes," he said. "Ah, I hear their step on the stair now."

The tread of men walking quickly and the sound of voices raised in eagerness came to the room. The powerful figure of Jimmy Grayson trembled slightly, then grew rigid.

"I did not dream of it," he said, as if to himself; "nor have I now sought to take it from others."

"Nor have you done so," said Harley, boldly; "because it belonged to no man."

Mrs. Grayson stepped forward, as if in fear that her husband was about to be taken from her, because at that moment the volume of the voices and the trampling increased and paused at her door. Then the crowd poured into the room and hailed the victor.

Harley slipped to one side, and no one in the committee knew that the nominee had been notified already, but the correspondent never ceased to watch Jimmy Grayson. He saw how the nature of the man rose to the great responsibility that had been put upon him, how he nerved himself for his mighty task. He stood among them all, cool, dignified, and ready. Harley was proud that this was one of his countrymen, and when his last despatch was filed that night he wired to his editor in New York: "Please send me on the campaign with Grayson. I think it is going to be a great one." And back came the answer: "Stay with him until it is all over, election night."

The eyes of Harley, like those of so many of his countrymen, had always been turned eastward. To him New York was the ultimate expression of America, and beyond the great city lay the influence of Europe, of that Old World to which belonged the most of art and literature. The books that he read were written chiefly by Europeans, and the remainder by the men of New England and New York. He had never put it into so many words, even mentally, but he had a definite impression that the great world of affairs was composed of central and western Europe and a half-dozen Northern coast states of the American Union; beyond this centre of light lay a shadow land, growing darker as the distance from the central rays increased, inhabited by people, worthy no doubt, but merely forming a chorus for those who had the speaking parts.

The course of Harley's life confirmed him in this opinion, which perhaps was due more to literature than to anything else. With his eyes fixed on New York, the desire to go there followed, and when he succeeded, early, and became the correspondent of a great journal, he was soon immersed in the affairs of that world which seemed the world of action to him; and, being so much occupied thus, he forgot the regions which apparently lay in the shadow, including the greater portion of his own country.

Hence the two great Presidential conventions, in each of which Western influences were paramount, and in each of which a Western man was chosen, created upon him a new and surprising impression. He found himself in the presence of unexpected forces; he became aware that there was another way of looking at things, and this powerful sensation was deepened by the personality of Mr.

Grayson, in whom he saw intuitively that there was something fresh, original, and strong; he seemed less hackneyed and more joyous than the types that he found in the old states of the Union or the Old World, and, because of this, the interest of Harley, whose mind had a singularly keen and inquiring quality, was aroused; the regions that apparently lay in the shadow might have enough light, after all, and, seeing before him a campaign not less exciting than a war, he resolved to stay in it until the last battle was fought.

He took out the telegram from his editor and read it over again with keen satisfaction. "Out of one war and into another," he murmured. The conventions had been held early; it was now only the first week in June, and the election would be in the first week of November; before him lay five months of stress and perhaps storm, but he thought of it only with pleasure.

Harley always travelled light, carrying only two valises, and an hour sufficed for his packing. Then, like the old campaigner that he was, he slept soundly, and early the next morning he went again to the hotel at which the Graysons were staying. He felt a little hesitation in sending up a card so soon, knowing what swarms of people Mr. Grayson had been compelled to receive and how badly he must stand in need of rest, but there was no help for it.

While he sat in the huge lobby waiting the return of the boy, the hum of many voices about him rose almost to a roar, varied by the rustling of many newspapers. The place was filled with men, talking over the thrilling events of the night before, the nomination and the nominee, while every newspaper bore upon its front page a great picture of the new candidate.

The boy came back with a message that Mr. Grayson would see him; and Harley, a minute later, was knocking at the door, which the candidate himself opened. This man, who was his own usher, was the nominee of a great party, he might become the President of the United States—of ninety million people, of what was in nearly every material sense the first power in the world; and yet Harley, when in Europe, seeking information from the youngest and least *attaché* of a legation, had been compelled to go through an infinite amount of form and flummery. The contrast was lasting.

"Come in," said Mr. Grayson, courteously, and Harley at once acted upon the invitation. Mrs. Grayson, at the same moment, came from the inner room, quiet and self-contained, and Harley bowed with respect.

"I dare say there is nothing you wish to ask me which a lady should not hear," said Mr. Grayson, with a slight smile. "Mrs. Grayson is my chief political adviser."

"It is no secret," replied Harley, also smiling. "I have merely come to tell you that the *Gazette*, my paper, has instructed me to keep watch over you from now until election night, and to describe at once and at great length for its readers every one of your wicked deeds. So I am here to tell you that I wish to go along with you. You are public property, you know, and you can't escape."

"I know that," said Jimmy Grayson, heartily; "and I do not seek to escape. I am glad the representative of the *Gazette* is to be you. I do not know what course your paper will take, but I am sure that we shall be friends."

"The *Gazette* is independent; its editor is likely to attack you for some things and to praise you for others. But I am here to tell the news."

"Then we are comrades for a long journey," said Jimmy Grayson.

Thus it was settled simply and easily by the two who were most concerned, and Harley throughout the little interview was struck by the difference between this man and many other famous men with whom in the course of business he had held journalistic dealings. Here was a lack of conventionality, and an even stronger note of simplicity and freshness. The candidate, with his new honors, still held himself as one of the people, it never occurred to him that he might assume a pose and the public would accept it; he was democracy personified, and he was such because he was unconscious of it. His perfect freedom of manner, which Harley had not liked at first, now became more attractive.

"We leave at eleven o'clock for my home," said Mr. Grayson, "and arrive there to-morrow morning. I have some preparations to make, but I shall begin the campaign a day or two later."

"I intend to go with you to your town," said Harley. "You know the compact; I cannot let you out of my sight."

Mrs. Grayson, a grave, quiet woman, spoke for the first time.

"You shall come along, not merely as a sentinel, but as one of our little party, if you will, on one condition," she said.

"What is that?"

"On condition that you come to our house and take dinner with us to-morrow."

Harley gave her a grateful look. He felt that the candidate's wife approved of him, and he liked the approval of those who evidently knew how to think. And it would be far pleasanter to travel with Jimmy Grayson as a friend than as one suspected.

"I am honored, Mrs. Grayson," he said, "and I shall be happy to come."

Then he left them, and when he passed into the hall he saw that the burden of greatness was being thrust already upon the Grayson family, as callers of various types and with various requests were seeking their rooms. But he hurried back to his own hotel, and as it was some distance away he took the street-car. There he was confronted by long rows of newspapers which hid the faces of men, and whenever a front page was turned towards him the open countenance of Mr. Grayson looked out at him with smiling eyes. Everybody was reading the account of the convention, and now and then they discussed it; they spoke of the candidate familiarly; he was "Jimmy" Grayson to them—rarely did they call him Mr. Grayson; but there was no disrespect or disesteem in their use of the diminutive "Jimmy." They merely regarded him as one of themselves, and their position in the matter differed in no wise from that of Mr. Grayson; it was a matter of course with both. To Harley, fresh from other lands, it seemed in the first breath singular, and yet in the second he liked it; the easy give-and-take promoted the smoothness of life, and men might assume false values, but they were not able to keep them. His thoughts returned for a moment to the least little *attaché* whose manner was more important than that of a Presidential nominee.

Harley, with his two valises, was at the station somewhat ahead of time, as he wished to see Mr. and Mrs. Grayson arrive, curious to know in what sort of state or lack of it they would come.

Mr. Grayson's intention of going at once to his home was not published in the press, and there was only the ordinary crowd at the station, some coming, some leaving, but all bearing upon their faces the marks of haste and impatience. As the people hurried to and fro, the sound of many tongues arose. There was nearly every accent of Europe, but the American rose over and enveloped all. Many writers from other lands, seeking only the bad, had pronounced the Babel coarse, vulgar, and sordid; but Harley, seeking the good, saw in it men and women toiling to better their condition in the world, and that fact he knew was not bad.

Through the station windows he saw the tall buildings rise floor on floor, and there was a clang of car-bells that never ceased. In the fresh morning air it was inspiriting, and Harley felt himself a part of the crowd. He was no hermit. Life and activity and the spectacle of people filled with hope always pleased him.

An ordinary cab arrived, and Mr. and Mrs. Grayson, alighting from it, bought their tickets at the window, just like anybody else, and then sought inconspicuous seats in the corner of the waiting-room, as their train would not be ready for five minutes. In the hastening crowd they were not noticed at first, but even in the dusk of the corner the smoothly shaven face and massive features of Mr. Grayson were soon noticed. His picture had been staring at them all from the front page of the newspapers, and here was the reality, too like to be overlooked. There was a sudden delay in the crowd; the two streams, one flowing outward and the other inward, wavered, then stopped and began to stare at the candidate, not intrusively, but with a kindly curiosity that it considered legitimate. Harley had quietly

joined the Graysons, and they gave him a sincere welcome. The people unfamiliar with his face began to speculate audibly on his identity.

The crowd in the station, reinforced from many side-doors, thickened, and Mr. and Mrs. Grayson, under the gaze of so many eyes, became uneasy and shy. Harley, who had been made a member of their party, found himself sharing this awkward feeling, and he was glad to hear the announcement that the train was ready.

The three abreast moved towards the gate, and the crowd opened a way just wide enough, down which they marched, still under the human battery of a thousand eyes. To Harley, although little of this gaze was meant for him, the sensation was indescribable. It was something to be an object of so much curiosity, but the thrill was more than offset by the weight that it put upon one's ease of manner.

He saw many of the people—it was a curious manifestation—reach out and touch the candidate's sleeve lightly as he passed. But Mr. Grayson, if he knew it, took no notice and marched straight ahead, all expression discharged from his face. Harley saw that this was the disguise eminent public men must assume upon occasions, and he was willing that they should keep the task.

When the great iron gate leading to his train was closed behind him, Harley felt a mighty sense of relief. It seemed to him that he had run a gantlet not much inferior to that through which the Indians put the captive backwoodsmen, and the dark-red walls of the car rose before him a fortress of safety.

It was an ordinary Pullman, and Mr. and Mrs. Grayson had not secured the drawing-room, but the usual berths like Harley's, and he joined them in their seats. He felt now a certain pleasure in the situation. The pressure of circumstances was making him, in a sense and for the time being, a member of their family. He was glad that the other correspondents would wait to join the candidate at his home, as it gave him a greater chance to establish those personal relations needful on a long campaign that must be made together.

The whistle blew, the train moved, and they passed through miles of city, and then through suburbs growing thinner until they melted away into the clean, green prairie, and Harley, opening the window, was glad to breathe the unvexed air that came across a thousand miles of the West. He leaned back in his seat and luxuriously watched the quietly rolling country, tender with the breath of spring, as it spun past. That mighty West of which he had thought so little seemed to reach out with its arms and invite him, and he was glad to go.

Presently he was aware of an unusual movement of people down the aisles of the car, accompanied by a certain slowing of the pace when they passed the seats in which the Graysons and he sat. They were coming from the other cars, too, and now and then the aisle would choke up a little, but in a moment the shifting figures would relieve it, and the endless procession of faces moved on.

The Graysons, following Harley's example, were gazing out of the window at the cheerful country, but the correspondent knew that Mr. Grayson was fully conscious of this human stream, and that he himself was the cause of it. Yet he lost none of his good temper even when some, venturing further, asked if he were not the nominee, adding that it was a pride to them to meet him and speak to him. In fact, the change from silence to conversation was a relief to Mr. Grayson, varying the monotony of that fixed gaze to which he had been subjected so long, and it was now that Harley saw him in a most favorable guise. His consciousness of a great talent did not interfere with a perfect democracy; it did not cause him to assume an air that said to these people, "I am better than you, keep your distance," but he gave the impression of ability solely through his simplicity of manner and the ease with which he adapted himself to the caliber of the person who spoke to him.

Thus the train swung westward hour after hour, and the procession through the car never ceased. The manner of the candidate did not change; however weary he may have grown, he was always affable, but not gushing, and Harley, watching keenly, judged that the impression he made was always favorable. He strove, too, to interpret this manner and to read the mind behind it. Was Mr. Grayson really great or merely a man of ready speech and pleasing address? Harley was willing to admit that the latter were qualities in themselves not far from great, but on the main contention he reserved his

judgment. He was still divided in his opinions, sometimes approving the complete democracy of the candidate and sometimes condemning. He had been born in the South, in a border state, and he grew up there amid many of the forms and formalities of the old school, and the associations of youth are not easily lost. Nor had a subsequent residence in the East brushed them away. This world of the West was still, in many respects, new to him.

He ate luncheon in the dining-car with the Graysons, and he noticed the bubbling joy of the black waiter who served them, and who showed two rows of white teeth in a perpetual smile. Harley appreciated him so much that he doubled his tip, but, as they were still watched by many eyes in the dining-car, he felt a certain nervousness in handling his knife and fork, as if the penalty of greatness, even by association, were too heavy for him. Once his eyes caught those of Mrs. Grayson, and a faint, whimsical smile passed over her face, a smile so infectious, despite its faintness, that Harley was compelled to reply in like fashion. It told him that she understood his constraint, and that she, too, felt it, but Harley doubted whether it was in like degree, as he believed that in the main women are better fitted than men to endure such ordeals. Mr. Grayson himself apparently took no notice.

Harley returned to their car with the Graysons, but in the afternoon he detached himself somewhat, and came in touch with the fluctuating crowd that passed down the aisle—it was always a part of his duty, as well as his inclination, to know the thoughts and feelings of outsiders, because it was outsiders who made the world, and it was from them, too, that the insiders came.

Harley found here that the chief motive as yet was curiosity; the campaign had not entered upon its sharp and positive state, and the personality of Mr. Grayson and of his opponent still remained to be defined clearly.

The train sped westward through the granary of the world, cutting in an almost direct line across the mighty valley of the Mississippi, and they were still hundreds of miles away from the Grayson home. In going west both parties had gone very far west, and the two candidates not only lived beyond the Mississippi, but beyond the Missouri as well.

The prairies were in their tenderest green, and the young grass bent lightly before a gentle west wind. In a sky of silky blue little clouds floated and trailed off here and there into patches of white like drifting snow, and Harley unconsciously fell to watching them and wondering where they went.

The sun, a huge red ball, sank in the prairie, twilight fell, the ordeal of the dining-car was repeated, and not long afterwards Harley sought his bed in the swaying berth. The next morning they were in the home town, and there were a band and a reception committee, and Harley slipped quietly away to his hotel, being reminded first by the Graysons that he was to take dinner with them.

He spent most of the day wandering about the town, gathering hitherto unnoticed facts about the early life of Mr. James Grayson, which in the afternoon he despatched eastward. Then he prepared for dinner, but here he was confronted by a serious problem—should one so far west wear evening clothes or not? But he decided at last in the affirmative, feeling that it would be the safe course, and, hiding the formality of his raiment under a light overcoat, he went forth into the street. Five minutes' walk took him to the house of Mr. Grayson, which stood in the outskirts, a red brick structure two stories in height, plain and comfortable, with a well-shaded lawn about it. It was now quite dark, but lights shone from several windows, and Harley, without hesitation, rang the bell.

II THE MAID

Harley's ring was not answered at once, and as he stood on the step he glanced back at the city, which, in the dark, showed only the formless bulk of houses and the cold electric lights here and there. Then he heard a light step, and the door was thrown open. He handed his card to the maid, merely saying, "Mr. and Mrs. Grayson," and waited to be shown into the parlor. But the girl, whose face he could not see, as the hall was dimly lighted, held it in her hand, looking first at the name and then at him. Harley, feeling a slight impatience, stepped inside and said:

"I assure you that I am the real owner of it—that is, of the name on the card."

"What proof have you?" she asked, calmly.

Harley had heard recently many phases of the servant-girl question, and this development of it amused him. She must be one of those ignorant and stubborn foreigners—a Swede or a German.

"Suppose you take the proof for granted and risk it," he said. "Mr. and Mrs. Grayson can quickly decide for you, and tell you whether I am right."

"They have gone out for a little walk," she said, still standing in the way, "and so many strange people are coming here now that I don't know whether to show you in or not. Maybe you are a reporter?"

"Well, and what then?"

"Or worse; perhaps you are a photographer."

"If I am, you can see that I have no camera."

"You might have a little one hidden under your overcoat."

"It is night, and cameras are used in the sunshine."

"We have electric lights."

Harley began to feel provoked. There were limits to perverseness, or should be.

"I am expected to dinner by Mr. and Mrs. Grayson," he said. "Will you kindly cease to keep me waiting and show me in? I shall not steal any of the furniture."

The maid was annoyingly calm.

"Mr. and Mrs. Grayson have not yet returned from a little walk which they were afraid to undertake until it grew dark," she said. "But I think I'll risk it and show you in if you will hold up your hand and swear that you haven't a camera hidden under your overcoat."

Harley's sense of humor came to his aid, and he held up his hand.

"I do solemnly swear," he said.

He tried to see the face of this maid, who showed a perversity that was unequalled in an experience by no means limited, but she stood in the duskiest part of the dim hall, and he failed. He knew merely that she was tall and slender, and when she turned to lead the way he heard a faint sound like the light tinkle of a suppressed laugh. Harley started, and his face flushed with anger. He had encountered often those who tried to snub him, and usually he had been able to take care of himself, but to be laughed at by a housemaid was a new thing in his experience, and he was far from liking it.

She indicated a small parlor with a wave of her hand and said:

"You can go in there and wait. You have promised not to steal the furniture, and, as the room contains only a piano, a table, and some chairs, all of which are too big to be hidden under your overcoat, I think that you will keep your promise."

She sped lightly away, leaving Harley trembling so much with amazement and anger that he forgot for at least two minutes to sit down. When he took off his overcoat he murmured: "Before Mr. Grayson thinks of ruling the United States he should discipline his own household."

The house was quiet; he heard no one stirring anywhere. The light from an electric lamp in the street shone into the parlor, and by its rays he saw Mr. and Mrs. Grayson coming up the street. Then the maid had told the truth about the "little walk," and he was early.

He leaned back in his chair and watched the pair as they approached their own house. Evidently they had stolen these few minutes in the dark to be alone with each other, and Harley sympathized with them, because it would be a long time before the wife could claim again that her husband was her own. They entered a side-gate, passed through the lawn, and a minute later were welcoming Harley.

"We did not expect to be gone so long," said Mrs. Grayson; "but we see that you have found the right place."

"Oh yes," said Harley; "a maid showed me in." Then he added: "I am very glad, indeed, to have been invited here, but if you want any more privacy I don't think you should have asked me; my kind will soon be down upon you like a swarm of locusts."

Mr. Grayson laughed and took a stack of telegraph envelopes six inches thick from a table.

"You are right, Mr. Harley," he said. "They will be here to-morrow, ready for the start. There are more than twenty applications for space on our train, and all of them shall have it. I don't think that the boys and I shall quarrel."

Mrs. Grayson excused herself, and presently they were summoned to dinner. Stepping out of a dusky hall into a brilliantly lighted room, Harley was dazzled for a moment, but he found himself bowing when she introduced him to "My niece, Miss Morgan, of Idaho." Then he saw a tall, slender girl, with a singularly frank and open countenance, and a hand extended to him as familiarly as if she had known him all her life. Harley, although he had not expected the offer of the hand, took it and gave it one little shake. He felt an unaccountable embarrassment. He saw a faint twinkle in the girl's eye, as if she found something amusing in his appearance, and he feared that he had made a mistake in coming in evening-dress. He flushed a little and felt a slight resentment towards Mrs. Grayson, because she had not told him of this niece; but he was relieved for the moment by an introduction to the third guest, Mrs. Boyle, an elderly lady, also a relative, but more distantly so.

Mrs. Boyle merely bowed, and at once returned Harley to the custody of the niece from Idaho, of whom he felt some fear, her singular freedom of manner and the faint twinkle that still lurked in her eye putting him on edge. Moreover, he was assigned to a seat next to her, and, as obviously he was expected to entertain her, his fear increased. This girl was not only Western, but Far Western, and, in his opinion, there was none so wise who could tell what she would do or say. He repeated to himself the word "Idaho," and it sounded remote, rough, and wild.

"Uncle James tells me that you are a correspondent, the representative of the *New York Gazette*," she said.

"Yes."

"And that you are to go with him on the campaign and write brilliant accounts of the things that never happen."

"I am sure that Mr. Grayson was not your authority for such a statement," said Harley, with a smile, although he did not wholly relish her banter.

"Oh no, Uncle James is a very polite man, and very considerate of the feelings of others."

"Then it is a supposition of your own?"

"Oh no, not a supposition at all; the *New York* newspapers sometimes reach us even in Idaho."

Harley did not respond to her banter, thinking it premature, as she had never seen him before. He could not forget the reserve and shyness natural to him, and he felt a sense of hostility. He glanced at her, and saw a cheek ruddier than the cheeks of American women usually are, and a chin with an unusually firm curve. Her hair was dark brown, and when the electric light flashed upon her it seemed to be streaked with dull gold. But the chin held him with an odd sort of fascination, and he strove to read her character in it. "Bold and resolute," he decided, "but too Western, entirely too Far

Western. She needs civilizing." He was rather glad that he was going away with Mr. Grayson on the morrow and would not see her again.

"I should think," she said; "that the life of a newspaper correspondent is extremely interesting. You have all the pleasures and none of the responsibilities; you go to war, but you do not fight; you enter great political campaigns, but you cannot be defeated; you are always with the victor and never with the vanquished; you are not bound by geographical limits nor by facts, nor—"

"Excuse me, Miss Morgan," interrupted Harley, with dignity. "In my profession, as in all others, there are irresponsible persons, but the great majority of its followers are conscientious and industrious. If you only knew how—"

"That sounds as if it had been prepared in advance," she exclaimed. "I am sure that you have used it many times before."

"You must not mind Sylvia," said Mrs. Grayson, smiling her grave, quiet smile. "She seldom means what she says, or says what she means."

"Aunt Anna," exclaimed Miss Morgan, "you are really too hard upon your beloved niece. I never before dined with the staff correspondent of a great New York newspaper, and I am really seeking information. Now I wish to know if in his profession imagination is the most valuable quality, as I have heard it said."

"Do you wish to embroil me with the press so early?" asked Mr. Grayson, laughing.

"I have heard great tales about them and their daring," she persisted. "I am not sure that even now he has not a camera concealed under his coat."

"Why, Sylvia, what a strange thing to say!" exclaimed Mrs. Grayson.

But Harley started in his seat and flushed a deep red. "Miss Morgan, I shall have to ask your pardon," he exclaimed.

Mr. and Mrs. Grayson looked at them in surprise.

"Here is something that we do not understand," said Mr. Grayson.

"Why, Uncle James, there is nothing strange about what I have said," continued Miss Morgan, with the most innocent face. "I thought all of them carried cameras, else how do we get all the wonderful pictures?"

Harley felt inclined to tell the entire table his experience, but on second thought he remained silent, as the girl from Idaho began to pique him, and he was not willing that the advantage should remain wholly with her, especially when she was from the very Far West. So he affected complete indifference, and, when they asked him about his adventures in the recent war on the other side of the world, he talked freely about them, which he had never done before, because, like most Americans, he was a modest man, enduring in silence lectures on the sin of boasting from others who boasted as they breathed. Most of the time he spoke apparently to Mr. and Mrs. Grayson, but he kept a side-look upon the girl from Idaho who had played with him and humiliated him.

She became silent, as if satisfied with the flight of the arrows that had gone already from her quiver, and seemed to listen with an air of becoming respect; but Harley surprised once or twice the lurking twinkle in her eye, and he was not sure that she was wholly subdued. Opposition and difficulties always increased his resolve, and he doubled his efforts. He spoke lightly of the kingdoms and republics whose fortunes he had followed in a casual way and of the men whom the heave of affairs had brought to the surface for a space, and always he kept that side-look upon her. These relations, surely, would impress, because what could she, a child of the Idaho wilds, know of the great world? And its very mystery would heighten to her its coloring and effect.

Harley could talk well, all the better because he talked so rarely of himself, and even now it was of himself only by indirection, because he spoke chiefly of men whom he had known and deeds that he had witnessed. Watching the girl closely with that side-look, he did not see the twinkle reappear in her eye; instead she sat demure and silent, and he judged that he had taken her beyond her depth. At last he stopped, and she said, in a subdued tone:

"Did I not tell you, Uncle James, that imagination was the great quality the correspondents need?"

Harley flushed, but he could not keep from joining Mr. Grayson in his laugh. The candidate, besides laughing, glanced affectionately at the girl. It was evident that his niece was a favorite with Jimmy Grayson.

"I shall ask Miss Morgan to tell me about Idaho," said Harley.

"It's quite wild, you know," she said, gravely; "and all the people need taming. But it would be a great task."

When they went back to the drawing-room Harley and the girl were behind the others, and he lingered a moment beside her.

"Miss Morgan," he said, "I want to ask your pardon again. You know it was in the dark, and mine was an honest mistake."

"I will if you will tell me one thing."

"What is it?"

"Have you really got a camera with you?"

"If I had I should take a picture of you and not of Mr. Grayson."

Harley remained awhile longer, and Miss Morgan's treatment remained familiar and somewhat disconcerting, rather like the manner of an elder sister to her young brother than of a girl to a man whom she had known only two or three hours. When he rose to leave, she again offered him her hand with perfect coolness. Harley, in a perfunctory manner, expressed his regret that he was not likely to see her again, as he was to leave the next day with Mr. Grayson. The provoking twinkle appeared again in the corner of her eyes.

"I don't intend that you shall forget me, Mr. Harley," she said, "because you *are* to see me again. When you come to Washington in search of news, I shall be there as the second lady of the land—Aunt Anna will be first."

"Oh, of course, I forgot that," said Harley, but he was not sure that she had Washington in mind, remembering Mrs. Grayson's assertion that she did not always mean what she said nor say what she meant.

The night was quite dark, and when he had gone a few yards Harley stopped and looked back at the house. He felt a distinct sense of relief, because he was gone from the presence of the mountain girl who was not of his kind, and whom he did not know how to take; being a man, he could not retort upon her in her own fashion, and she was able to make him feel cheap.

The drawing-room was still lighted, and he saw the Idaho girl pass in front of one of the low windows, her figure completely outlined by the luminous veil. It seemed to him to express a singular, flexible grace—perhaps the result of mountain life—but he was loath to admit it, as she troubled him. Harley, although young, had been in many lands and among many people. He had seen many women who were beautiful, and some who were brilliant, but it had been easy to forget every one of them; they hardly made a ripple in the stream of his work, and often it was an effort to recall them. He had expected to dismiss this Idaho girl in the same manner, but she would not go, and he was intensely annoyed with himself.

He went to the telegraph-office, wrote and filed his despatch, and then, lighting a cigar, strolled slowly through the streets. It was not eleven o'clock, but it seemed that everybody except himself was in bed and asleep. The lights in all the houses were out, and there was no sound whatever save that of the wind as it came in from the prairie and stirred the new foliage of the trees. "And this is our wicked America, for which my foreign friends used to offer me sincere condolences!" murmured Harley.

But he returned quickly to his own mental disturbance. He felt as he used to feel on the eve of a battle that all knew was coming off, there on the other side of the world. He was then with an army which he was not at all sure was in the right; but when he sat on a hill-top in the night, looking at the flickering lights of the enemy ahead, and knowing that the combat would be joined at dawn, he could

not resist a feeling of comradeship with that army to which, for a time—and in a sense, perhaps, alien—he belonged. Those soldiers about him became friends, and the enemy out there was an enemy for him, too. It was the same now when he was to go on a long journey with Jimmy Grayson, who stood upon a platform of which he had many doubts.

He turned back to the hotel, and when he entered the lobby a swarm of men fell upon him and demanded the instant delivery of any news which he might have and they had not. They were correspondents who had come by every train that afternoon—Hobart, Churchill, Blaisdell, Lawson, and others, making more than a score—some representing journals that would support Grayson, and others journals that would call him names, many and bad.

"We hear that you have been to dinner with the candidate," said Churchill, the representative of the New York *Monitor*, a sneering sheet owned by one foreigner and edited by another, which kept its eye on Europe, and considered European opinion final, particularly in regard to American affairs; "so you can tell us if it is true that he picks his teeth at table with a fork."

"You are a good man for the *Monitor*, Churchill," said Harley, sharply. "Your humor is in perfect accord with the high taste displayed, and you show the same dignity and consideration in your references to political opponents."

"Oh, I see," said Churchill, sneering just as he had been taught to sneer by the *Monitor*. "He is the first guest to dine with the Presidential nominee, and he is overpowered by the honor."

"You shut up, Churchill!" said Hobart, another of the correspondents. "You sha'n't pick a quarrel with Harley, and you sha'n't be a mischief-maker here. There are enough of us to see that you don't."

Harley turned his back scornfully upon Churchill, who said nothing more, and began to tell his friends of Grayson.

"He is an orator," he said. "We know that by undoubted report, and his manner is simple and most agreeable. He has more of the quality called personal magnetism than any other man I ever saw."

"What of his ability?" asked Tremaine, the oldest of the correspondents.

Harley thought a little while before replying.

"I can't make up my mind on that point," he said. "I find in him, so far as I can see, a certain simplicity, I might almost say an innocence, which is remarkable. He is unlike the other public men whom I have met, but I don't know whether this innocence indicates superficiality or a tact and skill lying so deep that he is able to plan an ambush for the best of his enemies."

"Well, we are to be with him five months," said Tremaine, "and it is our business to find out."

III

THE START

They were to start at dawn the next day, going back to Chicago, where the campaign would be opened, and Harley, ever alert, was dressing while it was yet dusk. From a corner of the dining-room, where he snatched a quick breakfast, he saw the sun shoot out of the prairie like a great red cannon-ball and the world swim up into a sea of rosy light. Then he ran for the special train, which was puffing and whistling at the station, and the flock of correspondents was at his heels.

Harley saw Mr. and Mrs. Grayson alighting from a cab, and, satisfied with the one glance, he entered the car and sought his place. Always, like the trained soldier, he located his camp, or rather base, before beginning his operations, and he made himself comfortable there with his fellows until the train was well clear of the city and the straggling suburbs that hung to it like a ragged fringe. Then he decided to go into the next coach to see Mr. and Mrs. Grayson, making, as it were, a dinner call.

The candidate and his wife had taken the drawing-room, not from any desire of his for seclusion or as an artificial aid to greatness, but because he saw that it was necessary if he would have any time for thought or rest. Harley approached the compartment, expecting to be announced by the porter, but a veiled lady in the seat next to it rose up before him. She lifted the veil, which was not a disguise, instead being intended merely as a protection against the dust that one gathers on a railroad journey, and Harley stopped in surprise.

"And so you see, Mr. Correspondent," she said, "that your farewell was useless. You behold me again inside of twelve hours. I wanted to tell you last night that I was going on this train, as Uncle James has great confidence in my political judgment and feels the constant need of my advice, but I was afraid you would not believe me. So I have preferred to let you see for yourself."

She gave Harley a look which he could not interpret as anything but saucy, and his attention was called again by the bold, fine curve of her chin, and he was saying to himself: "A wild life in the mountains surely develops courage and self-reliance, but at the expense of the more delicate and more attractive qualities." Then he said aloud, and politely:

"I see no reason, Miss Morgan, why you should have credited me with a lack of faith in your word. Have I said anything to induce such a belief in your mind?"

"No, you have merely looked it."

"I do not always look as I feel," said Harley, in embarrassment, "and I want to tell you, Miss Morgan, that I am very glad you are going with us on this Chicago trip."

"You look as if you meant that," she said, gravely; "but if I am to take you at your word, you mean nothing of the kind."

"I do mean it; I assure you I do," said Harley, hastily. "But are Mr. and Mrs. Grayson ready to receive visitors?"

"That depends. I am not sure that I want Uncle James interviewed so early in the day. At least I want to know in advance the subject of the interview. You can give me, as it were, the heads of your discourse. Come, tell me, and I will render a decision."

She regarded Harley with a grave face, and he was divided between vexation and a sort of reluctant admiration of her coolness. She was bold and forward, not to say impertinent, but she seemed wholly unconscious of it, and, after all, she was from one of the wildest parts of Idaho. He kindly excused much of her conduct on the ground of early association.

"I do not seek to interview any one," he said; "I merely wish to pay my respects to Mr. and Mrs. Grayson, having been their guest, as you know."

"Oh, then you can go in," she said, and, calling to the porter, she told him to announce Mr. Harley, of the New York *Gazette*. "Of the New York *Gazette*," she said again, with what Harley considered unnecessary repetition and emphasis, and he had a new count against her.

Mr. and Mrs. Grayson received him with courtesy, even with warmth, and Harley saw that he had made new progress in their esteem. He remained with them only a few minutes, and he said nothing about the objectionable conduct of Miss Morgan, who had set herself as a guard upon their door. He deemed it wiser to make no reference to her at all, because she was only an insignificant and momentary incident of the campaign, not really relevant. Chicago was merely a beginning, and they would drop her there. When he returned from the drawing-room, she was still sitting near the door, and at his appearance she looked up pertly.

"Did you find him in a good-humor?" she asked.

"I think Mr. Grayson is always in a good-humor, or at least he is able to appear so."

"I doubt whether perpetual good-humor, or the appearance of it, is desirable. One ought to make a difference in favor of friends; I do not care to present an amiable face to my enemies."

She pursed up her lips and looked thoughtful.

"When Uncle James goes to Washington to take the Presidency," she continued, "he will need me to protect him from the people who have no business with him."

"I hope the last remark is not personal?"

"Oh no," she said; "I recognize the fact that the press must be tolerated."

Harley again felt piqued, and, not willing to retire with the sense of defeat fresh upon him, he sat down near her and began to talk to her of her Western life. He wished to know more about the genesis and progress of a girl who seemed to him so strange, but he was not able to confine her to certain channels of narrative. She was flippant and vague, full of allusions to wild things like Indians or buffaloes or grizzly bears, but with no detailed statement, and Harley gathered that her childhood had been in complete touch with these primitive facts. Only such early associations could account for the absence of so many conventions.

The correspondents who travelled with Harley were mostly men of experience, readily adaptable, and the addition of a new member to Mr. Grayson's party could not escape their attention. Harley was surprised and shocked to find that all of them were well acquainted with Miss Morgan inside of six hours, and that they seemed to be much better comrades with her than he had been. Hobart, the most frivolous of the lot, and the most careless of speech, returning from the Grayson car, informed him that she was a "great girl, as fine as silk."

"That's a queer expression to apply to a lady," said Harley. "It smacks of the Bowery."

"And what if it does?" replied Hobart, coolly. "I often find the Bowery both terse and truthful. And in this case the expression fits Miss Morgan. She's the real article—no fuss and frills, just a daughter of the West, never pretending that she is what she isn't. I heard her speak of you, Harley, and I don't think she likes you, old man. What have you been doing?"

"I hope I have been behaving as a gentleman should," replied Harley, with some asperity; "and if I have been unlucky enough to incur her dislike, I shall endure it as best I can."

He spoke in an indifferent tone, as if his endurance would not be severely tested.

"But you are missing a good time," said Hobart. "There are not less than a dozen of us at her feet, and the Grayson car is full of jollity. I'm going back."

He returned to the car, and Harley was left alone just then, as he wished to be, and with an effort he dismissed Miss Morgan from his thoughts. Mr. Grayson would speak that night in Chicago, and an audience of twenty thousand people was assured; this fact and the other one, that it would be his initial address, making the event of the first importance.

Harley as a correspondent was able not only to chronicle facts, which is no great feat, but also to tell why, to state the connection between them, and to re-create the atmosphere in which those facts occurred and which made them possible. He was well aware that a fact was dependent for its

quality—that is, for its degree of good or evil—upon its surrounding atmosphere, just as a man is influenced by the air that he breathes, and for this reason he wished to send in advance a despatch about Mr. Grayson and his personality as created by his birth and associations.

He rested his pad on the car-seat and began to write, but Miss Morgan intruded herself in the first line. This question of character, created by environment, would apply to her as well as to her uncle; but Harley, angrily refusing to consider it, tore off the sheet of paper and, throwing it on the floor, began again. The second trial was more successful, and he soon became absorbed in the effort to describe Mr. Grayson and his remarkable personality, which might be either deep and complex or of the simplest Western type.

As he wrote Harley became more and more absorbed in his subject, and with the absorption came spontaneity. He did not know how well he was writing, nor what a vivid picture he was presenting to the vast Eastern population to whom Jimmy Grayson was as yet but a name. It was a despatch that became famous, reprinted all over the Union, and quoted as the first description of the candidate as he really was—that is, of the man. And yet Harley, reading it days later, recognized in it something that nobody else saw. It was a blend. In every fourth line Sylvia Morgan again, and despite his efforts, had obtruded herself. He had borrowed something from her to add to Jimmy Grayson, and he felt that he had been seeking excuses for her manner.

But this fact did not impinge upon Harley now, when he read the despatch preparatory to filing it at Chicago. He merely felt that he had made an attempt to solve Jimmy Grayson, and in doing so had fulfilled his duty.

As he folded up the article the loud voice of Hobart hailed him from the other end of the car, and he beheld that irresponsible man entering with the candidate's niece.

"You see what he has been about all this time, Miss Morgan?" said Hobart. "He has been at work. Harley, you know, is the only conscientious man among us."

"I have remarked already his devotion to duty," she said, sedately; "but do you think, Mr. Hobart, we should disturb him now? We do not know that he has finished his task."

Harley flushed. He did not wish to be thought a prig or one who made a pretence of great industry, and, although Miss Morgan's voice was without expression, he believed that irony lay hidden somewhere in it.

"You are mistaken," he said; "my work is over, for the time, at least. It was something that had to be done, or I should not have stolen off here alone."

Then he went back with them to the Grayson car, where a joyous group had gathered. Mr. and Mrs. Grayson were in the drawing-room, with the door shut, working upon the candidate's speech at Chicago, Harley surmised, and hence there was no restraint. Of this group the girl from Idaho was the centre and the sun. She seemed to be on good terms with them all, to the great surprise of Harley, who had known her longer than they, and who had not been able to get on with her at all, and he sat rather on the fringe of the throng, saying but little.

Again she inspired him with hostility; she seemed, as before, too bold, too boisterous, too much the mountain maid, although he could not analyze any particular incident as wrong in itself. And clearly she had won the liking, even the admiration, of his associates, all of whom were men of wide experience. Tremaine, the dean of the corps, a ruddy, white-haired old fellow, who had written despatches from the Russo-Turkish war, which was ancient history to Harley, warmed visibly to Miss Morgan. "It is always the way with those old gallants," was Harley's silent comment. But he had never before characterized Tremaine in such a manner.

He was afraid of her sharp tongue, knowing that a woman in such respects is never averse to taking an unfair advantage of a man; but she paid no heed to him, talking with the others and passing over him as if he had not been present; and, while this was what he wanted in the first place, yet, now that he had it, he resented it as something undeserved. But if she would not speak to him, he,

too, would keep silence, a silence which he was convinced had in it a disdainful quality; hence it was not without a certain comfort and satisfaction.

But Harley was forced to admit that if she was of the bold and boisterous type, she was a favorable specimen within those unfavorable limits. While she was familiar, in a measure, with these men, yet she was able to keep them at the proper distance, and no one presumed, in any respect. She radiated purity and innocence, and it was to ignorance only that Harley now charged her faults.

They reached Chicago the next morning, and at noon Hobart knocked at the door of Harley's room at the hotel.

"There is some idle time this afternoon," said Hobart, "and Tremaine and I have asked Miss Morgan to go driving. She has accepted, but it takes four to make a party, and you are the lucky fourth."

He allowed no protestations, and, after all, Harley, who had been under much strain for some time, was not averse to an hour or two in the fresh air.

"Miss Morgan has never been in Chicago before," said Hobart, "and it is our duty to show it to her."

Hobart, who drove, put Miss Morgan upon the seat beside him, and Tremaine and Harley, who sat behind, occupied what was to some extent the post of disadvantage; but Tremaine, safe in his years, would not permit the rear seat to be neglected. He talked constantly, and her face, of necessity, was often turned to them, giving Harley opportunity to see that it had a most becoming flush.

She had an eager interest in everything—the tall buildings, the wind-swept streets, and the glimpses of the wide, green lake. Harley saw that Chicago bulked much more largely in her imagination than in his, and he began to fear that he had been neglectful; it was the most concrete expression of the West, and, as the greatest achievement of a new people in city building, it deserved attention for qualities peculiarly its own, and there could be no doubt either of Miss Morgan's admiration or pleasure. She was seeking neither for the old nor the picturesque, which are not always synonymous, but was in full sympathy with the fresh, active, and, on the whole, joyous life around her. It was sufficient to her to be a part of the human tide, and to feel by contact the keenness and zest of the human endeavor. She was not troubled by the absence of ruins.

"But the city is flat and unpicturesque," once said Harley.

"All the better," she rejoined. "I have so much of silence and grandeur in Idaho that I enjoy the sight of two million people at work on this billiard-table that is Chicago. I like my own kind, I like to talk to it and have it talk to me. I suppose that the mountains have a voice, but the voice is too big for perpetual conversation with a poor little mortal like myself. After a while I want to come down to my own level, and I find it here."

Harley glanced at her. The flush was still on her face, and there was a soft light in her eyes. He could not doubt that she was sincere, and she started in his mind thoughts that were not altogether new to him; he wondered if excessive reverence for the antique did not indicate a detachment from the present, and therefore from life itself, and, as a logical sequence, a lack of feeling for one's own kind. He had heard an elderly man from Chicago, dragged about by his wife and daughters in Rome, exclaim in disgust, "I would not give a single street corner in Chicago for all Rome!" The elderly Chicagoan had been drowned in derisive laughter, but Harley could understand his point of view, and now, as he remembered him, he had for him a fellow-feeling.

Hobart took them through many streets, one much like another, and then over a white asphalt drive beside the great lake. The shores were low, but to Harley the lake had the calm restlessness and expanse of the sea, and the wind had the same keen tang that comes over miles of salt. He saw the girl's eyes linger upon the vast sheet of green, and the incipient hostility that he felt towards her disappeared for a time. Somewhere in her nature, strait though the place might be, there was a feeling for fine things, and he felt a kindred glow.

They were rather quiet when they drove back towards the hotel, but she spoke at last of her uncle James and his speech that night, which might justify the expectations of either his friends or his enemies. There had grown up lately in the theatrical world a practice of "trying a new piece on the dog"—that is, of presenting it first in some small town which was not too particular—but now the political world was moving differently in this particular case. The candidate was to make his first appearance in one of the greatest of cities, before two million people, so to speak, and the ordeal would be so severe that Harley found himself apprehensive for Jimmy Grayson's sake. The feeling was shared by his niece.

"You don't think he will fail, do you?" she said, in an appealing tone to Hobart.

"Fail!" replied that irrepressible optimist. "He can't fail! The bigger the crowd the better he will rise to the occasion."

But she did not seem to be wholly convinced by Hobart's cheerfulness, which was too general in its nature—that is, inclusive of everything—and turned to Harley and Tremaine as if seeking confirmation.

"It will be a terrible test," said Harley, frankly, "but I feel sure that Mr. Grayson will pass it with glory. He is a born orator, and he has courage."

"I thank you for your belief," she said, giving Harley a swift glance of gratitude, and unaccountably he felt a pleasing glow at the first gracious words she had ever spoken to him.

"I could not bear it if he failed," she continued. "He is my uncle, and he is our own Western man. What things would be in the newspapers to-morrow!"

"If Mr. Grayson should fail to-night, he would recover himself at his second speech; he has your spirit, you know," said the ancient Tremaine.

But she did not seem to relish his elderly gallantry. "How do you know I have spirit?" she asked. "I have done nothing to indicate it."

"I inferred it," replied he, bowing, but she only lifted her chin incredulously, and Tremaine subsided, his suppression giving Harley some quiet enjoyment.

They returned, chiefly in silence, to the hotel. The dusk was coming down over the great city, and with it a grayish mist that hid the walls of the buildings, although the electric lights in lofty stories twinkled through it like signal-fires from hill-tops. Miss Morgan seemed subdued, and at the hotel door she said to them in dismissal: "I thank you; you have given me much pleasure."

"I rather think that she is wrapped up in Mr. Grayson's success," said Hobart, "and, as she intimates, it will come pretty near to breaking her heart if he fails."

In the lobby Harley met Churchill, of the *Monitor*, and Churchill, as usual, was sneering.

"I imagine that Grayson will make a display of provincialism to-night," he said. "America will have to blush for herself. I have copies of the *Monitor*, and all our London cables show the greatest amazement in Great Britain and on the Continent that we should put up such an *outré* Western character for President, one of the Boys, you know."

"The Grayson of the *Monitor* is not the Grayson of reality," replied Harley, "and the opinion of Europe does not matter, because Europe knows nothing about Mr. Grayson."

"Oh, I see! You are falling under the influence," said Churchill, nastily.

"What do you mean?" demanded Harley.

But Churchill would not answer. He sauntered away still sneering. Harley looked after him angrily, but concluded in a few moments that his wrath was not worth while—Churchill, trained to look always in the wrong direction could never see anything right.

IV THE FIRST SPEECH

When Harley started at an early hour for the vast hall in which Mr. Grayson was to speak, he realized that there was full cause for the trepidation of his feminine kind—perhaps in such moments women tremble for their men more than they ever tremble for themselves—and he had plenty of sympathy for Mrs. Grayson and Miss Morgan. The city, astir with the coming speech, was free to express in advance its opinion of it, both vocally and through its press, which was fairly divided—that is, one-half was convinced that it would be an overwhelming triumph, and the other half was equally sure that it would be a failure just as overwhelming.

Harley had in his pocket a copy of his own paper—the *Gazette*—the latest to reach him, and he had read it with the greatest care, but he saw that it remained independent; so far, it neither endorsed nor attacked Grayson; and, also, he had a telegram from his editor instructing him to narrate the events of the evening with the strictest impartiality, not only as concerned facts, but, above all, to transmit the exact color and atmosphere of the occasion. "I know that this is hard to do," he said, but with the deft and useful little compliment that a wise employer knows how to put in at the end, he added: "I am sure that you can do it." And he knew his man; Harley would certainly do it.

Harley, seated in an obscure corner of the stage, but one offering many points of vantage for his own view, saw the vast crowd come quickly into the hall, among the largest in the world, and he heard the hum of voices, in which he thought he could distinguish two notes, one of favor and one of attack. Yet the audience was orderly, and on the whole the element of curiosity prevailed. The correspondent, quick to read such signs, saw that the people had an open mind in regard to Jimmy Grayson; it was left to the candidate to make his own impression. Churchill took a seat near him and began to annoy him with depreciatory remarks about Grayson, not spoken to Harley in particular, but to the wide world. Hobart once said that Churchill needed no audience, preferring to talk to the air, which could make no reply of its own, but must return an echo.

Harley saw Mrs. Grayson and her niece slip quietly into a box, sitting well back, where they could be seen but little by the audience; and then, knowing that Mr. Grayson had arrived, he went behind the wings, where the candidate sat waiting.

Mr. Grayson received him with a calm and pleasant word; if his family were in a tremble, he was not; at least he was able to hide any apprehension that he might feel, and he remarked, jestingly: "It is apparent that I will have an audience, Mr. Harley; they will not ignore me."

"No, you are a good puller," rejoined Harley.

There were some dry preliminaries—introductory remarks by the chairman and other necessary bores—and then the audience began to call for Grayson. The speech would be reported in full by short-hand, for which mechanical work the staff correspondent always hires a member of that guild, and Harley was free for the present. He resolved to go into the box with Mrs. Grayson and Miss Morgan, but he changed his mind when he glanced at their faces. There was pallor in their cheeks, and their whole attitude was of strained and intense waiting. For them the crucial moment had come, and Harley had too much humanity to disturb them, even with well-meant efforts, at such a moment.

The hum in the crowd increased to a roar, a thunderous call for Grayson, but there was a pause on the stage, where no figures moved. The chairman glanced uneasily towards the wings and shuffled in his seat as if he did not know what to do, but his apprehension did not last long.

The candidate appeared, coming forward with a steady step, his face pale and apparently inexpressive; but Harley could see that the eyes, usually so calm, were lighted up by a fire from within. Suddenly all his fear for Grayson sank away; it came upon him with the finality of a lightning flash that here was a man who would not fail, and by an unknown impulse he looked from the candidate

to the box in which Miss Morgan sat. She seemed to have read his faith in his eyes, for a look of relief, even joy, came over her face.

This intuition of the two was justified, as the candidate did not have to conquer his audience. He held it in his spell from the opening sentence; the golden and compelling oratory, afterwards so famous, was here poured before the greater world for the first time. Harley listened to the periods, smooth but powerful, and he could not throw off their charm; some things were said of which he was not sure, and others with which he positively disagreed, but for the time they all seemed true. Jimmy Grayson believed them—there could be no doubt of it; every word was tinged with the vivid hue of sincerity—that was why they held the audience in a spell that it could not escape; these were convictions, not arguments that he was speaking, and the people received them as such. Moreover, he was always clear and direct, he had a Greek precision of speech, and there was none in the audience who could not follow him.

Harley, no orator himself, had in the course of his profession heard much oratory, some good, much bad, and even now he struggled against the charm of Grayson's voice and manner, and sought to see what lay behind them. Was there back of this golden veil any great originating or executive power, or was he, like so many others who speak well, a voice and nothing more? An orator might win the Presidency of the United States, but his gift would not necessarily qualify him to administer the office. It was a tribute to Harley's power of will or detachment that he was able at such a time to ask himself such a question.

But he forgot these after-thoughts in the pleasurable sympathy that his view of the candidate's wife and niece aroused. Their faces were illumined with joy. Feeling his spell so strongly themselves, they knew without looking that the audience felt it, too, and the evening could be no fuller for them. Here he was, a hero not only for his womenkind, but for all whom his womenkind could see, and Harley thought that under the influence of this feeling Miss Morgan's features had become very soft and feminine. The curve of the jaw was gentle rather than firm, and now in her softer moments it seemed to Harley that something might be made of this mountain girl, say by the deft hands of an Eastern and older woman. Then he blushed at himself for such a condescending thought, and turned to his task—that is, the effort to reproduce for readers in New York, the next morning, the atmosphere of that evening in a Chicago hall, and the exact relation that Mr. Grayson, the people, and the events of the hour bore to each other.

Harley was a conscientious man, interested in his work, and when he gave the last page of the despatch to a telegraph-boy the speech was nearly over. He said emphatically that it was a success, that the audience was brought thoroughly under the spell, but whether this spell would endure after the candidate was gone he did not undertake to prophesy. The coldest and most critical seeker after truth and nothing but the truth could have found no fault with what he wrote.

He gave the last page of the despatch to the telegraph-boy, and entered the secluded box that held Mrs. Grayson and Miss Morgan. Two elderly Chicago men, who played at politics and who were warm enthusiasts for Grayson, were there, and Harley was introduced to them. But he talked to them only as long as politeness demanded, and then, with all sincerity, he congratulated Mrs. Grayson on her husband's triumph.

"I never had a doubt of it," she replied, her voice tremulous, and honestly forgetful in the glory of the moment of all the fears that had been assailing her a few hours ago. "I knew what he could do."

Harley turned presently to Miss Morgan, and he spoke in the same vein to her, but she asked, with some asperity, "Did you think he could fail?"

"Failure is possible, I suppose, in the case of anybody."

"But you do not know our Western spirit."

"I am learning."

Her gentleness was gone. She resented what she chose to consider an attempt at patronage of the West, and Harley again was made the target for the arrows of her sarcasm. Yet he did not

resent it with his original acerbity; custom was dulling the sharp edge of her weapons, and, instead of wounding him, they rather provoked and drew him on. He was able to reply lightly, to suggest vaguely the crudities of Idaho, and to incite her to yet more strenuous battle for her beloved mountains.

But both ceased to talk, because the candidate was approaching his climax, and the grand swell of his speech had in it a musical quality that did not detract from its power to carry conviction. Then he closed, and the thunders of applause rose again and again. At last, after bowing many times to the gratified audience, he came back to the box, and his niece, her eyes shining with delight, sprang up, as if driven by an impulse, and, throwing her arms about his neck, kissed him. The act was seen by many, and it was applauded, but Harley did not like it; her emotion seemed to him too youthful, to smack too little of restraint—in short, to be too Western. Despite himself, he frowned, and when she turned back towards the box she saw the frown still upon his face. There was an instant fiery flash in her eye, and she drew herself up as if in haughty defiance, but she said nothing then, nor did she speak later when she left with the Graysons, merely giving him a cold good-night bow.

Harley lingered a little with the other correspondents, and was among the last to leave the building. He was thinking of the Idaho girl, but he did not fail to notice what was going on, and he saw a group of middle-aged or elderly men, the majority of them portly in figure and autocratic in bearing, follow the trail of Jimmy Grayson. Although familiar with the faces of only one or two in the group, he knew instinctively who they were. It was a gathering of the great, moneyed men of the party, eager to see the attitude of Grayson upon affairs that concerned them intimately, and prompt to take action in accordance. They were the guardians of "vested" interests, interests watched over as few things in this world are, and they were resolved to see that they took no harm. But the speech of the night had been general in its nature, a preliminary as it were, and Harley judged that they would do nothing as yet but skirmish upon the outskirts, keeping a wary eye for the main battle when it should be joined.

"Did you notice them?" asked white-haired Tremaine in his ear.

"Oh yes," replied Harley, who knew at once what he meant; "I watched them leave the hall."

"One gets to know them instinctively," said Tremaine. "I've seen them like a herd of bull-dogs—if such animals travelled in herds—on the heels of every presidential candidate for the last forty years, and that covers ten campaigns. But I suppose they have as much right to look after their interests as the farmer or mechanic has to look after his."

"Yet it is worth while to watch them," said Harley, and all in the group concurred.

They were to leave in the afternoon for Milwaukee, which gave plenty of time for rest, and Harley, who needed it, slept late. But when he rose and dressed he went forth at once, after his habit, for the morning papers, buying them all in order to weigh as well as he could the Chicago opinion of Grayson. The first that he picked up was sensational in character, and what he saw on the front page did not please him at all. There was plenty of space devoted to Grayson, but almost as much was given to an incident of the evening as to Grayson himself. There was a huge picture of a beautiful young girl throwing her arms around Jimmy Grayson's neck, and kissing him enthusiastically. The two occupied the centre of the stage close to the footlights, and twenty thousand people were frantically cheering the spectacle. By the side of this picture was another, a perfectly correct portrait of Miss Morgan, evidently taken from a photograph, and under it were the lines: "Jimmy Grayson's Egeria—the Beautiful Young Girl Who Furnishes the Western Fire for His Speeches."

And then in two columns of leaded type, under a pyramid of head-lines, was told the story of Sylvia Morgan. Flushed with enthusiasm, the account said, she had come from Idaho to help her uncle, the candidate. Although only eighteen years of age—she was twenty-two—she had displayed a most remarkable perception and grasp of politics and of great issues. It was she, with her youthful zeal, who inspired Mr. Grayson and his friends with courage for a conflict against odds. He consulted her daily about his speeches; it was she who always put into them some happy thought, some telling phrase that was sure to captivate the people. In a pinch she could make a speech herself, and she would probably be seen on the stump in the West. And she was as beautiful as she was intellectual and

eloquent; she would be the most picturesque feature of this or any campaign ever waged in America. It continued in this vein for two columns, employing all the latest devices of the newest and yellowest journalism, of which the process is quite simple, provided you have no conscience—that is, you take a grain of fact and you build upon it a mountain of fancy, and the mountain will be shaped according to the taste of the builder.

Harley would have laughed—these things always seemed to him childish or flippant rather than wicked—if it had not been for the photograph. That was too real; it was exactly like Sylvia Morgan, and it implied connivance between the newspaper and some body else. In Idaho it might have one look, but here in Chicago it would have another, and in New York it would have still another and yet worse. She ought to see the true aspect of these things. To Harley, reared with the old-fashioned Southern ideals, from which he never departed, it was all inexpressibly distasteful—he did not stop to ask himself why he should be more concerned about the picture of Miss Morgan than those of many other women whom he saw in the newspapers—and his feeling was not improved by the entrance of Churchill and his sneering comment.

"A good picture of her," said Churchill. "These Western girls like such things. Of course she sent it to the newspaper office."

"I do not know anything of the kind, nor do you, I think," replied Harley, with asperity. "Nor am I aware that the West is any fonder than the East of notoriety."

"Have it any way you wish," said Churchill, superciliously. "But I fail to see why you should disturb yourself so much over the matter."

His tone was so annoying that Harley felt like striking him, but instead ignored him, and Churchill strolled carelessly on, humming a tune, as he had seen insolent people on the stage do in such moments.

Harley thrust the newspaper into his pocket, and went into one of the ladies' parlors, where he saw Miss Morgan sitting by a window and looking out at the hasty life of Chicago. She did not hear his approach until he was very near, and then, starting at the sound of his footsteps, she looked up, and her cheeks flushed.

"It should be a happy day for you," said Harley, "and I suppose that you are enjoying the triumph."

"Why should I not?" she replied. "I have a share in it."

"So you have, and the press has recognized it."

"What do you mean?"

"I was just looking at a very good picture of you," said Harley, and he spread the paper before her, hoping that she would express surprise and distaste. But she showed neither.

"Oh, I've seen that already," she said, quite coolly. "Don't you think it a good picture?"

"I have no fault to find with the likeness," replied Harley, with some meaning in his tone.

"Then what fault have you to find?"

Harley was embarrassed, and hesitated, seeking for the right words—what did it matter to him if she failed to show the reserve that he thought part of a gentlewoman's nature.

"You infer more than I meant," he said, at last. "I merely felt surprise that they should have obtained a photograph so quickly."

The slightly deepened flush in her cheeks remained and she surveyed him with the same cool air of defiance.

"They would have had a picture, anyhow, something made up; was it not better, then, to furnish them a real one than to have a burlesque published?"

"It's hardly usual," said Harley, more embarrassed than ever. "But really, Miss Morgan, I have no right to speak of it in any connection."

"No, but you were intending to do so. It was in your eye when I looked up and saw you coming towards me."

Her voice had grown chilly, and her gaze was fixed on Harley. The Western girl certainly had dignity and reserve when she wished them, but he did not believe that she chose the right moments to display these admirable qualities.

"I did not know that I had such a speaking countenance," said Harley. "And even if so, you must not forget that you might read it wrong."

"I do not think so," she said, still chilly, and, glancing up at the clock, she added: "It is almost twelve, and I promised Aunt Anna to be with her a half-hour ago."

At the door she paused, turned back, and a flashing smile illuminated her face for a moment.

"Oh, Mr. Harley," she said, "don't you wish some newspaper would print your picture?"

Then she was gone, leaving him flushed and irritated. He was angry, both at her and himself; at himself because he had expected to rebuke her, to show her indirectly and in a delicate way where she was wrong, and he had never even got as far as the attack. It was he who had been put upon the defence, when he had not expected to be in such a state, and his self-satisfaction suffered. But he told himself that she was a crude Western girl, and that it was nothing to him if she forced herself into the public gaze in a bold and theatrical manner.

A little later all left for Milwaukee, where Mr. Grayson was to make another great speech in the evening, and Harley again refrained from joining the group that soon gathered around Miss Morgan, and Mrs. Grayson, also, who, being in a very happy mood, made a loan of her presence as a chaperon, she said, although, being a young woman still, it gave her pleasure to hear them speak of her husband's brilliant triumph the night before, and to enjoy the atmosphere of success that enveloped the car.

The run from Chicago to Milwaukee is short, but Harley, despite his pique—he was young and naturally of a cheerful temperament—might have joined them before their arrival if his attention had not been attracted by another group, that body of portly, middle-aged men, heavy with wealth and respectability, who had silently cast a dark shadow upon the meeting at Chicago. They were men of power, men whose brief words went far, and they held in their hands strings that controlled many and vast interests when they pulled them, and their hands were always on the strings. They were not like the great, voluble public; they worked, by choice and by opportunity, in silence and the dark, and their kind has existed in every rich country from Babylonia to the United States of America. They were the great financial magnates of Jimmy Grayson's party, and nothing that he might do could escape their notice and consideration. It was more than likely that in the course of the campaign he would feel a great power pressing upon him, and he would not be able to say who propelled it.

Harley knew some of these men by name; one, the leader of the party, a massive, red-faced man, was the Honorable Clinton Goodnight, a member of the Lower House of Congress from New York, but primarily a manufacturer, a man of many millions; and the younger and slenderer man, with the delicately trimmed and pointed beard, was Henry Crayon, one of the shrewdest bankers in Wall Street. These two, at least, he knew by face, but no trained observer could doubt that the others were of the same kind.

Although silent and as yet casting only a shadow, Harley felt that sooner or later these men would cause trouble. He had an intuition that the campaign before them was going to be the most famous in the Union, dealing with mighty issues and infused with powerful personalities. Great changes had occurred in the country in the last few years, its centre of gravity was shifting, and the election in November would decide many things. He felt as if all the forces were gathering for a titanic conflict, and his heart thrilled with the omens and presages. It was a pleasurable thrill, too, because he was going to be in the thick of it, right beside the general of one of the great armies.

When they reached Milwaukee, Harley and all the correspondents went to the same hotel with the Graysons, and they remarked jocularly to the nominee that they would watch over him now night and day until the first Tuesday in November, and he, being a man of tact and human sympathies, without any affectations, was able to be a good fellow with them all, merely a first among his equals.

There was a great crowd at the station, ready to welcome the candidate, and the sound of shouting and joyous welcome arose; but Harley, anxious to reach the hotel, slipped from the throng and sprang into a carriage, one of a number evidently waiting for the Grayson party. It was a closed vehicle, and he did not notice until he sat down that it was already occupied, at least in part, by a lady. Then he sprang up, red-faced and apologetic, but the lady laughed—a curious little laugh, ironic, but not wholly unpleasant—and put out a detaining hand, detaining by way of gesture, because she did not touch him.

"You are very much surprised to find me here, Mr. Harley," said Miss Morgan. "You thought, of course, that I would be in the centre of that crowd, receiving applause and shaking hands, just as if I were a candidate, like my uncle James. You would not believe me if I told you that I came here to escape it."

"Why shouldn't I believe it?"

"Because I am going to tell you that your displeasure over the picture has made me feel so badly that I am resolved to do better, to be more modest, more retiring."

"Miss Morgan, you do me wrong," said Harley, with reddening face. "I have had no such thoughts."

"You fib in a good cause, but you cannot deceive me; I read your thoughts, but I am very forgiving, and I am resolved that we shall have a pleasant ride to the hotel together. Now, entertain me, tell me about that war, of which you saw so much."

She was not in jest, and she compelled him to talk. It was far from the station to the hotel, and she revealed a knowledge of the world's affairs that Harley thought astonishing in one coming from the depths of the Idaho mountains. She touched, too, upon the things that interested him most, and drew him on until he was talking with a zest and interest that permitted no self-consciousness. Resolved that he would not tell what he had seen, and by nature reserved, he was, within five minutes, under her deft questions, in the middle of a long narrative of events on the other side of the world. He saw her listening, her eyes bright, her lips slightly parted, and he knew that he held her attention. He was aware, too, that he was flattered by the interest that he had been able to create in the mind of this Idaho girl whose opinion he had been holding so cheaply.

"I envy a man," she said, at last, sighing a little. "You can go where you please and do what you please. Even our 'advanced women' have less liberty than the man who is not advanced at all. And yet I do not want to be a man. That, I suppose, is a paradox."

Harley was about to make a light reply, something in the tone of perforced compliment, but a glimpse of her caused him to change his mind. She seemed to have a touch of genuine sadness, and, instead, he said nothing.

When the carriage reached the ladies' entrance of the hotel they were still silent, and as Harley helped her from the carriage her manner was unchanged. The little touch of sadness was yet there, and it appealed to him. She surprised his look of sympathy, and the color in her cheeks increased.

"I am tired," she said. "I just begin to realize how greatly so much travelling and so many crowds weigh upon one."

Then, with the first smile of comradeship that she had given him, she went into the hotel.

The Graysons, Miss Morgan, Harley, Hobart, and a few others formed a family group again at the table, when they dined that evening, and all the tensivity and anxiety visible the day before was gone. Mr. Grayson's success in Chicago had been too complete, too sweeping to leave doubt of its continuance; he would be the hero and leader of his party, not a weight upon it, and the question now was whether or not the party had votes enough; hence there was a certain light and joyous air about them which gave to their short stay in the dining-room a finer flavor than any that a *chef* could add.

Churchill, of the *Monitor*, was not one of this party. Churchill did not confine his criticisms to his professional activities, but had a disposition to carry them into private life, injecting roughness into social intercourse, which ought to be smooth and easy. Therefore, somewhat to his own surprise,

which ought not to have been the case, he had not become a member of this family group, and had much to say about the "frivolous familiarity" of Jimmy Grayson and "his lack of dignity."

But on this evening Churchill had no desire to sit at table with the Graysons, because he felt that something great was going to happen in his life. For more than a day, now, he had been on the trail of a mighty movement that he believed hidden from all save himself and those behind this movement. He, too, had noticed the appearance at Chicago of the heavy, rich, elderly men, and he had spoken to one or two of them with all the respect and deference that their eminent position in the financial world drew from every writer of the *Monitor*. And his deference had been rewarded, because that afternoon he received a hint, and it came from no less a personage than the Honorable Clinton Goodnight himself, a hint that Churchill rightly thought was worth much to him.

There was another large hotel in Milwaukee, and it was to this that the financiers had gone, having ascertained first that Grayson would not be there; nor did they intend to go to the speech that evening. They had already, in the address at Chicago, weighed accurately the power of Jimmy Grayson with his party, and with wary old eyes, long used to watching the world and its people, they had seen that it would be great. Hence he was a man to be handled with skill and care, to be led, not knowing that he was led, by a bridle invisible to all save those who held it—but they, the financiers, would know very well who held it.

It was these men to whom Churchill came, having slipped quietly away from his associates, drawn by a hint that he might secure an interview of great importance, two columns in length and exclusive. Churchill was a true product of the *Monitor*, a worshipper of accomplished facts, a supporter of every old convention, believing that anything new or in rough attire was bad. Although he would have denied it if accused, he nearly always confounded manners with morals, and to him the opinion of Europe was final. Hence the *Monitor* and Churchill were well suited to each other. Moreover, Churchill enjoyed the society of the great—that is, of those who seemed to him to be the great—and he had an admirable flexibility of temperament; while easily able and willing to be very nasty to those whom he thought of an inferior grade, he was equally able and willing to be extremely deferential to those whose grade he considered superior. He was also intolerant in opinion, thinking that any one who differed from him on the subjects of the day was necessarily a scoundrel, wherein he was again in perfect accord with the *Monitor*.

It was, therefore, with an acute delight, blossoming into exultation, that Churchill slipped away from his associates and hastened towards the hotel where the financial magnates were staying. These were really great men, not the productions of a moment, thrown briefly into the lime-light, but solid like the pyramids. Mr. Goodnight must be worth forty millions, at the least, and he was a power in many circles. Churchill thrilled with delight that such a being should hint to him to come and be talked to, and he was more than ever conscious of his own superiority to his professional associates.

Churchill was not awed by the hotel clerk, but haughtily asked that his card be sent at once to Mr. Goodnight, and he concealed his pride when the message came back that he be shown up as soon as possible. He received it as the natural tribute to his importance, and he took his time as he followed the guiding hall-boy. But at the door of Mr. Goodnight his manner changed; it became deferential, as befitted modest merit in the presence of true and recognized greatness.

Mr. Goodnight was hospitable; there was no false pride about him; he was able in being great to be simple also, and Mr. Crayon and the others present shared his attractive manner.

"Ah, Mr. Churchill," he said, as he shook hands heartily with the correspondent, "it gives me pleasure, indeed, to welcome you here. We noticed your bearing in Chicago, and we were impressed by it. We therefore had an additional pleasure when we learned that you were the correspondent of the *Monitor*, New York's ablest and most conservative journal. The American press grows flippant and unreliable nowadays, Mr. Churchill, but the waves of sensationalism wash in vain around the solid base of the old *Monitor*. There she stands, as steady as ever, a genuine light-house in the darkness."

Mr. Goodnight, being a member of Congress, was able to acquire and to exhibit at convenient times a certain poetical fervor which impressed several kinds of people. Now his associates rubbed their hands in admiration, and Churchill flushed with pleasure. A compliment to the *Monitor* was also a compliment to him, for was he not the very spirit and essence of the *Monitor*?

"Before we get to business," continued Mr. Goodnight, in the most gratifyingly intimate manner, "suppose we have something just to wet our throats and promote conversation. This town, I believe, is famous for beer, but it is not impossible to get champagne here; in any event, we shall try it."

He rang, the champagne was brought, opened, and drunk, and Churchill glowed with his sense of importance. These were men of many millions, twice his age, but he was now one with them. Certainly none of his associates would have been invited by them to such a conference, and he was able to appreciate the fact.

"We want you, Mr. Churchill, to tell us something about Grayson," said Mr. Goodnight, in a most kindly tone; "not what all the world knows, those superficial facts which the most careless observer may glean, but something intimate and personal; we want you to give us an insight into his character, from which we may judge what he is likely to do or become. You know that he is from the West, the Far West, likely to be afflicted with local and provincial views, not to say heresies, and great vested interests within his own party feel a little shaky about him. We cannot have a revolutionary, or even a parochial, character in the presidential chair. Those interests which are the very bulwark of the public must be respected. We must watch over him, and in order to know how and what to watch, we must have information. We rely upon you to furnish us this information."

Churchill was intensely gratified at this tribute to his merit, but he was resolved not to show it even to these great men. Instead, he carelessly emptied his champagne glass, rubbed his chin thoughtfully, and then asked with a certain fulness of implication:

"Upon what precise point do you wish information, Mr. Goodnight? Of course, I have not been with Mr. Grayson very long, but I can say truthfully that I have observed him closely within that time, and perhaps no phase of a rather complicated character has escaped me."

"We feel quite sure of that," said Mr. Crayon, speaking for the first time, and using short, choppy sentences. "*Monitor*, as I happen to know, is extremely careful in the selection of its men, and this, I am journalist enough to understand, is most important errand upon which it can now send member of its staff."

Churchill bowed courteously to the deserved compliment, and remained silent while Mr. Goodnight resumed the thread of talk.

"What we want to know, Mr. Churchill," he said, "is in regard to the elements of stability in his character. Will he respect those mighty interests to which I have just alluded? Is he, as a comparatively young man, and one wholly ignorant of the great world of finance, likely to seek the opinion and advice of his elders? You know that we have the best wishes in the world for him. His interests and ours, if he but perceives it, run together, and it is our desire to preserve the utmost harmony within the party."

Churchill bowed. Their opinion and his agreed in the most wonderful manner. It was hard to say, in his present exalted state, whether this circumstance confirmed their intelligence or his, but it certainly confirmed somebody's.

"I have already taken note of these facts," he said, in the indifferent tone of one whose advice is asked often, "and I have observed that Mr. Grayson's character is immature, and, for the present at least, superficial. But I think he can be led; a man with a will not very strong can always be led, if those with stronger wills happen to be near, and Mr. Grayson's faults are due to weakness rather than vice."

There was an exchange of significant looks among Mr. Goodnight, Mr. Crayon, and their friends, and then an emphatic nodding of heads, all of which indicated very clearly to Churchill that they admired his acuteness of perception, and were glad to have their own opinion confirmed by one who observed so well.

"Wouldn't it be well to lay these facts before the readers of the *Monitor*?" suggested Mr. Goodnight, mildly. "We all know what a powerful organ the *Monitor* is, and what influence it has in conservative circles. It would be a hint to Mr. Grayson and his friends; it would show him the path in which he ought to walk, and it would save trouble later on in the campaign."

Churchill's heart thrilled again. This was a greater honor even than he had hoped for; he was to sound the mighty trumpet note of the campaign, but his pride would not let him show the joy that he felt.

"In giving these views—and I appreciate their great importance—shall I quote you and Mr. Crayon?" he asked, easily.

Mr. Goodnight mused a few moments, and twiddled his fingers.

"We want the despatch to appear in the shape that will give it the greatest effect, and you are with us in that wish, Mr. Churchill," he said, confidingly. "Now this question arises: if our names appear it will look as if it were a matter between Mr. Grayson and ourselves personally, which is not the case; but if it appears on the authority of the *Monitor* and your own, which is weighty, it will then stand as a matter between Mr. Grayson and the people, and that is a fact past denying. Now, what do you think of it yourself, Mr. Churchill?"

Since they left it so obviously to his intelligence, Churchill was bound to say that they were right, and he would write the warning, merely as coming from the great portion of the public that represented the solid interests of the country, the quiet, thinking people who never indulged in any foolish chase after a will-o'-the-wisp.

Mr. Goodnight and Mr. Crayon made many further suggestions about the points of the despatch, but they admitted ingenuously that they were not able to write, that they possessed no literary and effective style, that it would be for Mr. Churchill to clothe their crude thoughts—that is, if he approved of them—in trenchant phrase and brilliant style.

There was such an air of good-fellowship, and Churchill admitted to himself so freely that these men might make suggestions worth while, that he decided, moreover, as the hour was growing late, to write the despatch there and then, and tell to the world through the columns of the *Monitor*, not what Jimmy Grayson ought to do, but all the things that he ought not to do, and they were many. The most important of these related to the tariff and the currency, which, in the view of Mr. Goodnight and his friends, should be left absolutely alone.

Paper was produced, and Churchill began to write, often eliciting words of admiration from the others at the conciseness and precision with which he presented his views. It was cause for wonder, too, that they should find themselves agreeing with him so often, and they admired, also, the felicity of phrasing with which he continued to present all these things as the views of a great public, thus giving the despatch the flavor of news rather than opinion. When it was finished—and it would fill two full columns of the *Monitor*—the line was quite clearly drawn between what Jimmy Grayson could do and what he could not do—and Churchill was proud of the conviction that none but himself had drawn it. Mr. Grayson, reading this—and he certainly would read it—must know that it came from inspired sources, and he would see straight before him the path in which it was wise for him to walk. Churchill knew that he had rendered a great service, and he felt an honest glow.

"I think I shall file this at once," he said, "as it is growing late, and there is an hour's difference between here and New York."

They bade him a most complimentary adieu, suggesting that they would be glad to hear from him personally during the campaign, and announcing their willingness to serve him if they could; and Churchill left the hotel, contented with himself and with them. When he was gone, they smiled and expressed to each other their satisfaction. In fifteen minutes swift operators were sending Churchill's despatch eastward.

V "KING" PLUMMER

Meanwhile the evening was proving of no less interest to Harley than to Churchill, although in a quite different way. He had noticed, when they parted at the hotel door, the apparent sadness, or, rather, the touch of the pathetic in the manner of Miss Morgan, and he observed it again when they were all reunited at the hotel table. Heretofore she had been light, ironical, and bearing a full share in the talk, but now she merely replied when spoken to directly, and her tone had the tinge of melancholy. Mr. and Mrs. Grayson looked at her more than once, as if they were about to refer to some particular subject, but always they refrained; instead, they sought by light talk to divert attention from her, and they succeeded in every case but that of Harley.

It was not a long dinner, and as they returned to the ladies' parlor they were welcomed by a loud, joyous cry, and out of the dark of the room a big man projected himself to greet them. His first words were for Miss Morgan, whom he affectionately called "Little Girl," and whom he seized by the hands and kissed on the forehead. It was a loud voice, but round, full, and mellow, and Harley judged that it came from a big nature as well as a big body.

When the man stepped into the light, Harley saw that he was over six feet high, and with a width according. His broad face was covered with short, iron-gray beard, and his head was thatched with hair equally thick and of the same gray shade. In years he might have been fifty, and it was Harley's first impression at this moment that the big man was Miss Morgan's father—it came to him with a rather queer feeling that it had never occurred to him to ask about her parents, whether they were living or dead, and what kind of people they were or had been.

The stranger shook hands with Mr. and Mrs. Grayson, and expressed vocally the pleasure that his eyes also conveyed. Harley and Hobart were the only others present, and, turning to them, Mr. Grayson introduced the stranger, Mr. William Plummer—"King Plummer, you know."

Then Harley remembered vaguely, and he began to place Mr. Plummer. He recalled allusions in the press to one William Plummer, otherwise "King" Plummer, who lived in the far Northwest, and who, having amassed millions in ranching and mining, had also become a great power in the political world, hence his term "King," which was more fitting in his case than in that of many real kings. He had developed remarkable skill in politics, and, as the phrase went, held Idaho, his own state, in the hollow of his hand, and in a close election could certainly swing Montana and Wyoming as he wished, and perhaps Utah and Washington, too.

Harley's interest instantly became keen, and he did not take his eyes off "King" Plummer. Clearly he was a man of power; he fairly radiated it, not merely physically, but mentally. His gestures, his voice, every movement indicated a vast reserve strength. This was one of the great men whose development the rough field of the new West had permitted.

Harley was not alone interested in "King" Plummer, but also in the kiss that he had put upon the white forehead of Sylvia Morgan and his boisterous joy at seeing her. Since he was not her father, it was likely that he was her uncle, not by blood, as Jimmy Grayson was, but as the husband of an aunt, perhaps. Yes, this must be it, he concluded, and the kiss seemed more reasonable.

When "King" Plummer was introduced to Harley and Hobart, he shook hands with them most cordially, but as keen a man as Harley could see that he regarded them as mere youths, or "kids," as the "King" himself would have said. There was nothing depreciatory in this beyond the difference between age and great achievement and youth which had not yet had the time to fulfil its promise, and Harley, because of it, felt no decrease of liking and respect for "King" Plummer.

"The far Northwest is for you solidly, Jimmy," said the big man, with a joyous smile. "Idaho is right in line at the head of the procession, and Wyoming, Montana, and the others are following close after. They haven't many votes, but they have enough to decide this election."

Jimmy Grayson smiled. He had reason to smile. He, too, liked "King" Plummer, and, moreover, this was good news that he brought.

"I fancy that you have had something to do with this," he said. "You still know how to whisper a sweet word in the ear of the people."

The big man shook himself, laughed again, and looked satisfied.

"Well, I have done a lot of whispering," he admitted, "if you call it whispering, though most people, I'll gamble, would say it is like the clatter of a mill. And I've done some riding, too, both train and horse. The mountains are going to be all right. Don't you forget that, Jimmy."

"And it's lucky for me that 'King' Plummer is my friend," said Mr. Grayson, sincerely.

During this talk of politics, Sylvia Morgan was silent, and once, when "King" Plummer laid his big hand protectingly on her arm, she shrank slightly, but so slightly that no one save Harley noticed, not even the "King." The action roused doubts in his mind. Surely a girl would not shrink from her uncle in this manner, not from a big, kindly uncle like Plummer.

"I wanted to get down to Chicago and hear you at your first speech," went on "King" Plummer, in his big, booming voice, that filled the room, "but I couldn't manage it. There was a convention at Boisé that needed a little attention—one likes to look on at those things, you know"—his left eye contracted slightly—"and as soon as that was over I hurried down as fast as an express could bring me. But I've read in all the papers what a howlin' success it was, an' I'm goin' to hear you give it to the other fellows to-night—won't we, Sylvia?"

He turned to the girl for confirmation of what needed no confirmation, and her eyes smiled into his with a certain pride. She seemed to Harley to admire his bigness, his openness of manner and speech, and his wholesome character. After all, he was her uncle; the look that she gave him then was that of one who received protection, half paternal and half elder-brotherly.

"And now, Jimmy, I guess I've taken up enough of your time," exclaimed "King" Plummer, his big, resonant chest-tones echoing in the room, "and it's for you to do all the talkin' that's left. But I'll be in a box listenin', and just you do your best for the credit of the West and the mountains."

Grayson smiled and promised, and "King" Plummer joined them in the carriage that bore them to the hall. He took his place with them in such a natural and matter-of-fact manner that Harley was confirmed in his renewed opinion that he was Sylvia Morgan's uncle, or, at least, her next of kin, after Mr. Grayson.

At the hall "King" Plummer, as he had promised, sat in a box with Mrs. Grayson and Miss Morgan, and always he led the applause, which in reality needed no leading, the triumph at Chicago being repeated in full degree. Harley, watching him from his desk, saw that the big man was filled with sanguine expectation of triumph, and, with the glow of Jimmy Grayson's oratory upon him, could not see any such result as defeat. But Miss Morgan was strangely silent, and all her vivacity of manner seemed to be gone.

When the speech was nearly over Churchill sauntered in lazily by the stage entrance and took a seat near Harley. Harley had not noticed his previous absence until then.

"How's the speech to-night?" he asked, languidly; "same old chestnuts, I suppose."

"As this is Mr. Grayson's second speech," replied Harley, sharply, "it is a little early to call anything that he says 'same old chestnuts.' Besides, I don't think that repetition will ever be one of his faults. Why haven't you been here?"

"Oh, I've been cruising around a bit on the outside. The Associated Press, of course, will take care of the speech, which is mere routine."

He spoke with such an air of supercilious and supreme satisfaction that Harley looked at him keenly.

"Pick up anything?" he asked, briefly.

"Oh, a trifle or two; nothing, however, that you would care about."

"Now, I wonder what it is that makes him so content with himself," thought Harley, but he had little time to devote to Churchill, as his own despatch was occupying his attention.

Harley could not go back to the hotel with the Grayson party when the speech was over, as he had to file his despatch first, but he saw them all the next morning at the breakfast-table. "King" Plummer was there, too, as expansive as ever, and showing mingled joy and sorrow—joy over the second triumph of the candidate, which was repeated at great length in the morning papers, and sorrow because he could not continue with them on the campaign, which moved to Detroit for the third night.

"I'd be a happy man if I could do it," he said, in his booming tones, "happy for more reasons than one. It would be a big holiday to me. Wouldn't I enjoy hearing you tear the enemy to pieces night after night, Jimmy! and then I'd be with you right along, Sylvia."

He looked at the girl, and his look was full of love and protection. She flushed and seemed embarrassed. But there was no hesitation or awkwardness about the big man.

"Never you mind, little girl," he said; "when you are Mrs. Plummer—an' that ain't far away, I hope—you'll be with me all the time. Besides, I'm goin' to join Jimmy Grayson when he comes out West, an' make the campaign there with him."

The color in Miss Morgan's face deepened, and she glanced, not at "King" Plummer or her uncle, but at Harley, and when her eyes met his the color in her cheeks deepened still further. Then she looked down at her plate and was silent and embarrassed.

Harley, as he heard these words of the "King," felt a strange thrill of disapproval. It was, as he told himself, because of the disparity in ages. It was true that a man of this type was the very kind to restrain Sylvia Morgan, but twenty and fifty should never wed, man and wife should be young together and should grow old together. It was no business of his, and there was no obligation upon him to look after the happiness of either of these people, but it was an arrangement that he did not like, violating as it did his sense of fitness.

"King" Plummer was to leave them an hour later, taking a train for St. Paul, and thence for Idaho. He bade them all a hearty good-bye, shaking hands warmly with Jimmy Grayson, to whom he wished a career of unbroken triumph, repeating these good wishes to Mrs. Grayson, and again kissing Sylvia Morgan on the forehead—the proper kiss, Harley thought, for fifty to bestow upon twenty, unless twenty should happen to be fifty's daughter.

"We won't be separated long, Sylvia, girl," he said, and she flushed a deep red and then turned pale. To Harley he said:

"And I'll try to show you the West, young man, when you come out there. This is no West; Milwaukee ain't West by a jugful. Just you wait till you get beyond the Missouri, then we'll show you the real West, and real life at the same time."

There was a certain condescension in the tone of "King" Plummer, but Harley did not mind it; so far as the experience of life in the rough was concerned, the "King" had a right to condescend.

"I shall hold you to your promise," he said.

Then "King" Plummer, waving good-byes with a wide-armed sweep, large and hearty like himself, departed.

"There goes a true man," said Mr. Grayson, and Harley spontaneously added confirmation. But Miss Morgan was silent. She waved back in response to the King of the Mountains, but her face was still pale, and she was silent for some time. Harley now knew that "King" Plummer was not her uncle nor her next of kin after Jimmy Grayson in any way, but he was unable to tell why this marriage-to-be had been arranged.

But he quickly learned the secret, if secret it was; it was told to him on the train by Mrs. Grayson as they rode that afternoon to Detroit.

"If you were ever in Idaho," she said, "you would soon hear the story of "King" Plummer and Sylvia. It is a tragedy of our West; that is, it began in a great tragedy, one of those tragedies of the plains and the mountains so numerous and so like each other that the historians forget to tell about them. Sylvia's mother was Mr. Grayson's eldest sister, much older than he. She and her husband and children were part of a wagon-train that was going up away into the Northwest where the railroads did not then reach.

"It was long ago—when Sylvia was a little girl, not more than seven or eight—and the train was massacred by Utes just as they reached the Idaho line. The Utes were on the war-path—there had been some sort of an outbreak—and the train had been warned by the soldiers not to go on, but the emigrants were reckless. They laughed at danger, because they did not see it before their faces. They pushed on, and they were ambushed in a deep canyon.

"There was hardly any fight at all, the attack was so sudden and unexpected. Before the people knew what was coming half of them were shot down, and then those awful savages were among them with tomahawk and knife. Mr. Harley, I've no use for the Indian. It is easy enough to get sentimental about him when you are away off in the East, but when you are close to him in the West all that feeling goes. I heard Sylvia tell about that massacre once, and only once. It was years ago, but I can't forget it; and if I can't forget it, do you think that she can? Her father was killed at the first fire from the bushes, and then an Indian, covered with paint and bears' claws, tomahawked both her mother and her little brother before her eyes—yes, and scalped them, too. He ran for the girl next, but Sylvia—I think it was just physical impulse—dashed away into the scrub, and the Indian turned aside for a victim nearer at hand.

"Sylvia lay hid until night came, and there was silence over the mountain, the silence of death, Mr. Harley, because when she slipped back in the darkness to the emigrant train she found every soul that had been in it, besides herself, dead. Think, Mr. Harley, of that little girl alone in all those vast mountains, with her dead around her! Do you wonder that sometimes she seems hard?"

"No, I don't," replied Harley. Despite himself a mist came to his eyes over this pathetic tragedy of long ago.

"Sylvia has never said much about that night she spent there with the dead, in the midst of the wrecked and plundered train, but when a number of border men, alarmed about the emigrants, pushed on the next day to save them if possible, what do you suppose they found her doing?"

"I can't guess."

"She had got a spade somewhere from one of the wagons, and, little as she was, she was trying to bury her own dead. She was so busy that she didn't see them ride up, and William Plummer, their leader—he was a young man then—actually shed tears, so they say. Well, these men finished the burial, and Mr. Plummer put Sylvia on his horse before him and rode away. He adopted the little thing as his daughter. He said she was the bravest creature he had ever seen, and, as he was not likely to have any real daughter, she should take a place that ought to be filled.

"Were the Utes who did this massacre punished?"

"No one knows; the soldiers killed a number of them in battle, but whether the slain were those who ambushed the train is not decided in border history."

"I think I understand the rest of the story of Mr. Plummer and Miss Morgan," said Harley.

"Yes, it is not hard to guess. Mr. Grayson and her other relatives farther East did not hear of her rescue until long afterwards; they supposed her dead—but no one could have cared for her better than Mr. Plummer. He kept her first at his mining-hut in the mountains, but after two or three years he took her into town to Bois ; he put her in the care of a woman there and sent her to school. He loved her already like a real daughter. She was just the kind to appeal to him, so brave and so fond of the wild life. They say that at first she refused to stay in Bois . She ran away and tried to go on foot to him away up in the mountains, where the mining-camp was. When he heard of it, they say he laughed, and I suspect that he swore an oath or two—he lived among rough men you know—but

if he did, they were swear words of admiration; he said it was just like her independence and pluck. But he made her stay in Boisé."

"He knew what was right and what was due both him and her, because now he was becoming a great man in the Northwest. He rose to power in both financial and public life, and his daughter must be equal to her fortune. But he spoiled her, you can see that, and how could he help it?"

"She was fifteen before we heard that she was alive, and then Mr. Grayson and her other relatives wanted to take her and care for her, but Mr. Plummer refused to give her up, and he was right. He had saved her when he found her a little girl alone in all those vast mountains, and he was entitled to her. Don't you think so, Mr. Harley?"

"I do," replied Harley, with conviction.

"We yielded to his superior claim, but he sent her more than once to see us. We loved her from the first, and we love her yet."

Here Mrs. Grayson paused and hesitated over her words, as if in embarrassment.

"But it is not you and Mr. Grayson alone who love her," suggested Harley.

"It is not we alone; in Boisé everybody loves her, and at the mines and on Mr. Plummer's ranches they all love her, too."

"I did not mean just that kind of love."

Mrs. Grayson flushed a little, but she continued:

"You are speaking of Mr. Plummer himself; she was his daughter at first, and so long as she was a little girl I suppose that he never dreamed of her in any other light. But when she began to grow into a young woman, Mr. Harley—and a beautiful one, too, as beautiful as she is good—he began to look at her in a different way. When these elderly men, who have been so busy that they have not had time to fall in love, do fall in love, the fall is sudden and complete. Mr. Plummer was like the others. And what else could she do? She was too young to have seen much of the world. There was no young man, none of her own age, who had taken her heart. Mr. Plummer is a good man, and she owed him everything. Of course, she accepted him. I ask you, what else could she do?"

There was a defensive note in her voice when she said: "I ask you, what else could she do?" and Harley replied, with due deliberation:

"Perhaps she could do nothing else, but sometimes, Mrs. Grayson, I have my doubts whether twenty and fifty can ever go happily together."

"We like Mr. Plummer, and he is a great friend of my husband's."

Harley said nothing, but he, too, liked Mr. Plummer, and he held him in the highest respect. It required little effort of the imagination to draw a picture of the brave mountaineer riding from the Indian massacre with that little girl upon his saddle-bow. And much of his criticism of Sylvia Morgan herself was disarmed. She was more a child of the mountains even than his first fancy had made her, and it was not a wonder that her spirit was often masculine in its strength and boldness. It was involuntary, but he thought of her with new warmth and admiration. Incited by this feeling, he soon joined her and the group that was with her. He had expected to find her sad and comparatively silent, but he had never seen her in a more lively mood, full of light talk and jest and a gay good-humor that could not have failed to infect the most hardened cynic. Certainly he did not escape its influence, nor did he seek to do so, but as he watched her he thought there was a slight touch of feverishness to her high spirits, as if she had just escaped from some great danger.

Before they reached Detroit he talked a while with Mr. Grayson, in the private drawing-room of the car—Mrs. Grayson had joined the others—and "King" Plummer was the subject of their talk.

"Is he really such a great political power in the Northwest?" asked Harley.

"He is. Even greater than popular report makes him. I believe that in a presidential election he could decide the vote of five or six of those lightly populated states. He has so many interests, so many strings that he holds, and he is a man of so much energy and will. You see, I want to keep "King" Plummer my friend."

"I surely would, if I were in your place," said Harley, with conviction.

VI ON THE ROAD

The great success of Grayson as an orator was continued at Detroit. A vast audience hung breathless upon his words, and he played upon its emotions as he would, now thrilling the people with passion, and then stirring them to cheers that rolled like thunder. It became apparent that this hitherto obscure man from the Far West was the strongest nominee a somewhat disunited party could have named, and Harley, whose interest at first had been for the campaign itself rather than its result, began to have a feeling that after all Grayson might be elected—at least he had a fighting chance, which might be more if it were not for the shadow of Goodnight, Crayon, and their kind. Part of these men had gone back, among them the large and important Mr. Goodnight; but Harley saw the quiet Mr. Crayon still watching from a high box at Detroit, and he knew that no act or word of the candidate would escape the scrutiny of this powerful faction within the party.

Ample proof of his conclusion, if it were needed, came the next morning in a copy of the *New York Monitor*, Churchill's paper, which contained on its front page a long, double-leaded despatch, under a Milwaukee date line. It was Hobart who brought it in to Mr. Grayson and his little party at the breakfast-table.

"Excuse me for interrupting you, Mr. Grayson," he said, flourishing the paper as if it were a sort of flag; "but here is something that you are bound to see. It's what might be called a word in your ear, or, at least, it seems to me to have that sound. I guess that Churchill got a beat on us all in Milwaukee."

"I wish you would join us, Mr. Hobart, and read the whole article to us, if you will be so kind," said the candidate, calmly.

Nothing could have pleased Hobart better, and he read with emphasis and care, resolved that his hearers should not lose a word. Churchill had a good style, and he possessed a certain skill in innuendo, therefore he was able throughout the article to make his meaning clear. He stated that among those surrounding the candidate—he could give names if he would, but it was not necessary—there was a certain feeling that Mr. Grayson was not quite—at least not yet—as large as the position for which he had been nominated. Keen observers had noticed in him a predisposition to rashness; he had spoken lightly more than once of great vested interests.

"Uncle James, how could you be so lacking in reverence?" exclaimed Sylvia Morgan.

Mr. Grayson merely smiled.

"Go on, Mr. Hobart," he said.

"But some of the ablest minds in the country are closely watching Mr. Grayson," continued the article, "and where he needs support or restraint he will receive it. There are certain issues not embodied in the platform from which he will be steered."

"Now, I think that is too much!" exclaimed Mrs. Grayson, the indignant red rising in her cheeks.

"Their printing it does not make it true, Anna," said the candidate, mildly.

"As if you did not know enough to run your own campaign!" exclaimed the indignant wife.

But Jimmy Grayson continued to smile. "We must expect this sort of thing," he said; "it would be a dull campaign without it. Please go on, Mr. Hobart."

A number of eminent citizens, the article continued, would make a temporary sacrifice of their great business interests for the sake of the campaign and the people, and with their restraining care it was not likely that Mr. Grayson could go far wrong, as he seemed to be an amiable man, amenable to advice. Thus it continued at much length, and Harley, keen and experienced in such matters, knew very well whence Churchill had drawn his inspiration.

"The editor, also, makes comment upon this warning," said Hobart, who was undeniably enjoying himself.

"I should think that the despatch was enough," said Mrs. Grayson, whose indignation was not yet cooled.

"But it isn't, Mrs. Grayson," said Hobart; "at least, the editor of the *Monitor* does not think so. Listen.

"The campaign in behalf of our party has begun in the West, and we have felt the need of thoroughly reliable news from that quarter, free from the sensationalism and levity which we are sorry to say so often disgrace our American newspapers, and make them compare unfavorably with the graver and statelier columns of the English press."

"He is an Englishman himself," said Harley—"American opinion through an English channel." Even Jimmy Grayson laughed.

"At last we have obtained this information," continued Hobart, reading, "and we are able to present it to-day to those earnest and sincere people, the cultivated minority who really count, and who constitute the leaven in the mass of the light and frivolous American people. A trusted correspondent of ours, judicious, impartial, absolutely devoid of prejudices, has obtained from high sources with which common journalistic circles are never in touch—"

"How the bird befouls its own nest!" said the elderly Tremaine.

"—information that will throw much light upon a campaign and a candidate both obscure hitherto. This we present upon another page, and, as our cultivated readers will readily infer, the candidate, Mr. Grayson, is not a bad man—"

"Thanks for that crowning mercy," said Mr. Grayson.

"—but neither is he a great one; in short, he is, at least for the present, narrow and provincial; moreover, he is of an impulsive temperament that is likely to lead him into untrodden and dangerous paths. Our best hope lies in the fact that Mr. Grayson, who has not shown himself intractable, may be brought to see this, and will rely upon the advice of those who are fitted to lead rather than upon the reckless fancies of the Boys who are sure to surround him if he gives them a chance. In this emergency we are sure that all the best in the state will rally with us. The eyes of Europe are upon us, and we must vindicate ourselves."

"Uncle James," said Sylvia Morgan, sweetly, "I trust that you will remember throughout the campaign that the eye of Europe is upon you, and conduct yourself accordingly. I have noticed that in many of your speeches you seemed to be unconscious of the fact that Vienna and St. Petersburg were watching you. Such behavior will never do."

Mr. Grayson smiled once more. He seemed to be less disturbed than any one else at the table, yet he knew that this was in truth a warning given by an important wing of the party, and, therefore, he must take thought of it. A prominent politician of Michigan was present, the guest of Mr. Grayson, and he did not take the threat as calmly as the candidate.

"The writer of this despatch is with your party, I suppose," he said to Mr. Grayson.

"Oh yes; it is Mr. Churchill. He has been with us since the start."

"I would not let him go a mile farther; a man who writes like that—why, it's a positive insult to you!—should not be allowed on your train."

The Michigan man's face flushed red, and in his anger he brought his hand down heavily on the table; but Harley did not look at him, his full attention being reserved for the candidate. Here was a test of his bigness. Would he prove equal to it?

"I am afraid that would be a mistake," said Jimmy Grayson, amiably, to the Michigan man, "a mistake in two respects: our Constitution guarantees the freedom of the press, and the *Monitor* and its correspondent have a right to write that way, if they wish to do so; and if we were to expel Mr. Churchill, it would give them all the greater ground for complaint. Now, perhaps I am, after all, a narrow and ignorant person who needs restraint."

He spoke the last sentence in such a whimsical tone and with such a frank smile that they were all forced to laugh, even the Michigan man. But Harley felt relief. The candidate had shown no littleness.

"I was sure that you would return such an answer, Uncle James," said Sylvia Morgan, and the look that she gave him was full of faith. "Now, I mean to help you by converting Mr. Churchill."

"How will you do that?"

"I shall smile upon him, use my winning ways, and draw him into the fold."

There was a slight edge to her voice, and Harley was not sure of her meaning; but he and she were together in the parlor an hour later, when they met Churchill, and he had a chance to see. Churchill evidently was not expecting to find them there, but he assumed an important air, knowing that his despatches had been received and read, and feeling, therefore, that he was the author of a sensation. He anticipated hostility; he believed that Mr. Grayson's relatives and friends would assail him with harsh words, and he had spoken already to one or two persons of the six months' ordeal that he would have to endure. "But we must stand such things when they are incurred in the line of duty," he said, "and I have a way which, perhaps, will teach them to be not so ready in attacking me." He expected such a foray against him now, and his manner became haughty in the presence of Sylvia Morgan and Harley.

"We—that is, all of us—have just been reading your despatch in the *Monitor*," she said, in a most winning tone, "and on behalf of Uncle James I want to thank you, Mr. Churchill."

Churchill looked surprised but doubtful, and did not abate the stiffness of his attitude nor the severity of his gaze.

"We do feel grateful to you," she continued, in the same winning tone. "There was never a man more willing than Uncle James to learn, and, coming out of the depths of the West, he knows that he needs help. And how beautifully you write, Mr. Churchill! It was all put so delicately that no one could possibly take offence."

It was impossible to resist her manner, the honey of her words, and Churchill, who felt that she was but giving credit where credit was due, became less stern.

"Do you really like it, Miss Morgan?" he asked, and he permitted himself a smile.

"Oh yes," she replied, "and I noticed that the *Monitor* alone contained an article of this character, all about those big men who are watching over Uncle James, and will not let him go wrong. That is what you correspondents call a beat, isn't it?"

Churchill gave Harley a glance of triumph, but he replied, gravely:

"I believe it is what we call a beat, Miss Morgan."

"And you will continue to help us in the same way, won't you, Mr. Churchill?" she continued. "You know who those great men are; Mr. Harley, here, I am sure does not, nor does Mr. Blaisdell nor Mr. Hobart; you alone, as the *Monitor* says, can come into touch with such important circles, and you will warn us again and again in the columns of the *Monitor* when we are about to get into the wrong path. Oh, it would be a great service, and I know that Uncle James would appreciate it! You will be with us throughout the campaign, and you will have the chance! Now, promise me, Mr. Churchill, that you will do it."

Her manner had become most appealing, and her face was slightly flushed. It was not the first time that Harley realized how handsome she was, and how winning she could be. It was his first thought, then, what a woman this mountain maid would make, and his second that "King" Plummer should continue to look upon her as his daughter—she was too young to be his wife.

Nor was Churchill proof against her beauty and her blandishments. He felt suddenly that for her sake he could overlook some of Mr. Grayson's faults, or at least seek to amend them. It was not hard to make a promise to a pair of lovely eyes that craved his help.

"Well, Miss Morgan," he said, graciously, "since it is you who ask it, I will do my best. You know I am not really hostile to Mr. Grayson. The *Monitor* and I are of his party, and we shall certainly support him as long as he will let us."

"You are so kind!" she said. "You have seen so much of the world, Mr. Churchill, that you can help us greatly. Uncle James, as I told you, is always willing to learn, and he will keep a sharp watch on the *Monitor*."

"The *Monitor*, as I need not tell you," said Churchill, "is the chief organ in New York of good government, and it is never frivolous or inconsequential. I had hoped that what I sent from Milwaukee would have its effect, and I am glad to see, Miss Morgan, that it has."

Churchill now permitted himself a smile longer and more complacent, and Harley felt a slight touch of pity that any man should be blinded thus by conceit. And Sylvia did not spare him; by alternate flattery and appeal she drew him further into the toils, and Harley was surprised at her skill. She did not seem to him now the girl from Idaho, the child of the mountains and of massacre, but a woman of variable moods, and all of them attractive, no whit inferior to her Eastern sisters in the delicate airs and graces that he was wont to associate with feminine perfection.

As for Churchill, he yielded completely to her spell, not without some condescension and a memory of his own superiority, but he felt himself willing to comply with her request, particularly because it involved no sacrifice on his own part. He and the *Monitor* would certainly keep watch over Mr. Grayson, and he would never hesitate to write the words of warning when ever he felt that they were needed.

"Why did you treat him that way?" asked Harley, when Churchill had gone.

"What do you mean by 'that way'?" she asked, and her chin took on a saucy uplift.

"Well, to be plain, why did you make a fool of him?"

"Was my help needed?"

Harley laughed.

"Don't be too hard on Churchill," he said, "he's the creature of circumstance. Besides, you must not forget that he is going to watch over Mr. Grayson."

Churchill did not join the general group until shortly before the departure for the evening speech, and then he approached with an undeniable air of hostility and defence, expecting to be attacked and having in readiness the weapons with which he had assured himself that he could repel them. Miss Morgan, it is true, had received him well, but she, so he had begun to believe, was a girl of perception and discrimination, and the fine taste shown by her would not be exhibited by others. The candidate, surprising him much, received him cordially, though not effusively, and he was made welcome in similar manner by the others. There was no allusion whatever to his despatch, but he found himself included in the general gossip, just as if he were one of a group of good comrades.

Yet Churchill was not wholly pleased. His great stroke seemed to be ignored by all except Miss Morgan, when they ought to be stirred deeply by it, and he felt a sense of diminished importance. There should be confusion among them, or at least trepidation. He closely studied the faces of Mr. Grayson and the others to see if they were merely masking their fire, but no attack came either then or later.

Thus two or three days passed, and the campaign deepened and popular interest increased. Not since the eve of the Civil War had there been such complexity and intensity of interests, and never before had the personal factor been so strong. Out of the vast turmoil quickly emerged James Grayson as the most picturesque figure that ever appeared upon the stage of national politics in America. His powerful oratory, his daring, and his magnetic personality drew the eyes of all, and Harley saw that wherever he might be there the fight would be thickest. The correspondent's intuition had been right; he had come from a war on the other side of the world to enter another and greater campaign, one in which mind counted for more.

The candidate, in his rising greatness, was even a hero to his own family; and from none did he draw greater admiration than from his niece, Sylvia Morgan. A fierce champion of the West, she always bitterly resented the unconscious patronage of the East, which was really the natural patronage of age rather than of convinced superiority; and her uncle's triumph filled her with delight, because,

to her mind, it was the triumph of the West that she loved so well. Inspired with this feeling, she appealed to Harley about the sixth or seventh day of the campaign for his opinion on its result, and the correspondent hesitated over his answer. He found that his feeling towards her in this week had changed greatly, the elements in her character, which at first seemed to him masculine and forward, were now much modified and softened; always the picture of that child in the mountains, alone among her dead, rose before him, and then followed the picture of the little girl borne away on his saddle-bow by the brave borderer. He would think of her now with a singular softness, a real pity for those misty days which she herself had almost forgotten. Hence he hesitated, because what he deemed to be the truth would have in it a sting for her. But her clear eyes instantly read his hesitation.

"You need not be afraid to tell me your real opinion, Mr. Harley," she said. "If you think the chances are against Uncle James, I should like you to say so."

"I do think they are against him now, although they may not be so later on," replied he, equivocating with himself a little. "It is an uphill fight, and then one can easily deceive one's self; in a nation of eighty or ninety millions even a minority can surround a candidate with a multitude of people and a storm of enthusiasm."

"But Uncle James is the greatest campaigner ever nominated for the Presidency," she said, "and we shall yet win."

Harley said nothing in reply, but he gladly noticed her refusal to be discouraged, like other people having an admiration for courage and spirit. In fact, it seemed to him that she had a cheerfulness somewhat beyond the occasion.

Three days later—they were in Pittsburg then—she received a letter addressed in a strong, heavy hand, her name being spelled in large letters. Sylvia Morgan was alone in the hotel parlor when it was brought to her, and a strange shadow, or rather the shadow of a shadow, came over her face as she held it uneasily in her fingers and looked at the Idaho postmark in the corner. She knew the handwriting well, and she knew that it was a true index to the character of its author—rough, strong, and large. That handwriting could not lie, neither could he. She continued to hesitate, with the letter in her hand; it was the first time that she had ever done so with a letter of his, and she felt that she was disloyal. She heard a voice in the other parlor—the wide doors between were open; it was the voice of Harley speaking to her uncle, and a flush crept into her cheeks. Then she shook herself in a sudden little whirl of anger, and abruptly opened the letter with a swift, tearing sound. It was a longer letter than he usually wrote, and he said:

"My dearest little Sylvia—I have been here just two hours, and, I tell you, the sight of Idaho is good for the eyes, though it would be better if you were here with me, as you soon will be all the time, little one."

She paused a moment, looking away, and the shadow of the shadow came back to her face. Then she murmured: "He is the best man in the world," and resolutely went on:

"The more I see of the other states the better I like Idaho, and I like next best those that are most like it. Every peak out here nodded a welcome to me as I came in on the train. I've known them all for thirty years. I was a little afraid of them at first, they were so tall and solemn with their white crests, but we are old friends now—I'll have a white crest myself before long, and I'm fairly tall now, though perhaps I'll never be solemn. And I drew a deep breath and a long breath, the first one in days, the moment I crossed the Idaho line. The East sits rather heavy on me [he called Chicago the East], and my eyes get tired with so many people passing before them. Now, I'm not running down the East, which is all right in its own way, but I am glad we have so much mountain and unwatered plain out here, because then the people can never get so thick that they tread on you; not that they mean to do it, but crowds shove just because they can't help it."

Sylvia smiled, and for a moment there was a little moisture in her eyes. "Good old daddy," she murmured. Somehow, the pet name "daddy" seemed just to fit him. Then the resolute little frown came over her face again and she went on.

"As I said, Idaho is a good state. I like it when I am here, and I like it all the better when I come back to it. God's people live in these Rocky Mountain states, and that is a reason why I am so red-hot to have your uncle James elected. He is one of God's people, too, and they have never yet had a man of ours sitting in the White House down there at Washington and bossing the job. I think maybe he will teach them a new trick or two in running the old ship of state. But, Sylvia, I am not thinking so much even of him as I am of you. I know that I am a good deal older than you, as people count years, but I can truly say that my heart is young, and I think that I will be a husky chap for a good long time to come. You know I've had you nearly all your life, Sylvia, and we have the advantage of knowing each other. You are on to all my curves—that is, you don't have to get married to me to learn my failings.

"I guess I haven't the polish that those Eastern fellows put on, or that is put on them, but out here in the mountains I amount to somebody—you must let me brag a little, Sylvia—and if a man doesn't bow pretty low to Mrs. William Plummer, I'll have to get out my old six-shooter—I haven't carried one now for ten years—and shoot all the hair off the top of his head."

"He thinks he's joking, but I believe he would do it. Dear old daddy!" murmured Sylvia.

"I think you ought to become Mrs. Plummer now, Sylvia, but I guess I'm willing to wait until this campaign is over. For one ought to be willing to wait, if by waiting he can get such a good thing. Still, I hate to think of you away off there in the East, so many thousands of miles away from me, where there are no friendly old mountains to look down on you and watch over you, and I'm glad that my little girl is coming West again soon. I'll try to get down part of the way, say to Nebraska or Kansas, to meet you. I feel safer when I have you close by; then, if any of those young Eastern fellows should try to kidnap you and run away with you, my old six-shooter might have a word to say."

The sudden flush rose to her cheeks at this new joke, but she murmured nothing. The rest of the letter was about people whom they knew in Boisé and elsewhere in Idaho, and it closed:

"Don't think I'm growing gushing at my age, Sylvia, but Idaho, fine as she is, isn't near complete without you, and this is why I want you back in it just as soon as you can come.

Yours, lovingly,

"William Plummer."

She folded the letter carefully and put it back in the envelope. Then she sat for a long time, and her look was one of mingled tenderness and sadness. Her mind, too, ran back into the past, and she had a dim vision of the little child, who was herself, borne away on his saddle-horn by the strong mountaineer, who held her safely in the hollow of his arm. And then the years followed, and she always looked to the mountaineer for the protection and the love that were never wanting, but it was always the protection and love of one older and stronger than herself, one who belonged to the generation preceding her own.

Mr. Grayson, Harley, and the others were gone, and she heard no voices in the next parlor. She realized with suddenness how strongly and in how brief a time this little group, travelling through a vast country, had become welded together by the very circumstances of their travel—the comradeship of the road—and she sighed. She and Mrs. Grayson were about to leave them and return to the

Grayson home in the West, because women, no matter how nearly related, could not be taken all the way on an arduous campaign of six months. She had enjoyed this life, which was almost the life of a soldier—the crowds, the enthusiasm, the murmur, then the cheers of thousands of voices, the flight on swift trains from one city to another, the dash for the station sometimes before daylight, and all the freshness and keenness of youth about her. She had affiliated, she had become one of the group, and now that she was to leave it for a while she had a deep sense of loss.

There was a step beside her, and Mrs. Grayson, the quiet, the tactful, and the observant, entered. "Why, Sylvia," she said, "you are sitting in the dark!"

She touched the button, turned on the electric lights, and noticed the letter lying in the girl's hand. Her glance passed swiftly to Sylvia's face and as swiftly passed away. She knew instinctively the writer of the letter, but she said nothing, waiting for Sylvia herself to speak.

"I have a letter from Mr. Plummer," said Sylvia.

"What does he say?"

"Not much besides his arrival at Boisé—just some foolishness of his; you know how he loves to jest."

"Yes, I have long known that," said Mrs. Grayson, but she noticed that Sylvia made no offer to show the letter. Hitherto the letters of "King" Plummer had been read by all the Graysons as a matter of course, just as one shares interesting news.

"He is a good man, and he will be a good husband," said Mrs. Grayson. She was for the moment ruthless with a purpose, and when she said the words, although affecting not to watch, she saw the girl flinch—ever so little, but still she flinched.

"The best man in the world," repeated Sylvia Morgan, softly.

"And yet there are other good men," said Mrs. Grayson, quietly. "One good man does not exclude the existence of another."

Sylvia looked up at her, but she failed to take her meaning. Her quiet aunt sometimes spoke in parables, and waited for events to disclose her meaning.

Mrs. Grayson and Miss Morgan were to leave for the West the next afternoon, and shortly before their departure Harley came to tell them a temporary good-bye. Sylvia and he chanced to be alone for a little while, and she genuinely lamented her departure—they had become franker friends in these later days.

"I do not see why women cannot go through a political campaign from beginning to end," she said; "I'm sure we can help Uncle James, and there will be, too, so many interesting things to see. It will be like a war without the wounds and death. I don't want to miss any of it."

"I half agree with you," said Harley, smiling, "and I know that it would be a great deal nicer for the rest of us if you and Mrs. Grayson could go along."

He paused, and he had a sudden bold thought.

"If anything specially interesting happens that the newspapers don't tell about, will you let me write you an account of it?" he asked. "I should really like to tell you."

She flushed ever so little, but she was of the free-and-open West, and Harley always gave her the impression of courteous strength—he would take no liberties.

"You can write," she said, briefly, and then she immediately regretted her decision. It was the thought of "King" Plummer that made her regret it, but she had too much pride to change it now.

Harley was at the train with Mr. Grayson when she and Mrs. Grayson left, and Sylvia found that he had seen to everything connected with their journey. Without making any noise, and without appearing to work much, he accomplished a good deal. She had an impulse once to thank him, but she restrained it, and she gave him a good-bye that was neither cool nor warm, just sufficiently conventional to leave no inference whatever. But when the train was gone and Mr. Grayson and he were riding back in the cab to the hotel, the candidate spoke of her.

"She's a good girl, Harley," he said—he and Harley had grown to be such friends that he now dropped the "Mr." when he spoke directly to the correspondent. "She's real, as true as steel."

He spoke with emphasis, but Harley said nothing.

The group seemed to lose much of its vividness, color, and variety when the women departed, but they settled down to work, the most intense and exacting that Harley had ever known. All the great qualities of the candidate came out; he seemed to be made of iron, and on the stump he was without an equal; if any one in the audience was ready with a troublesome question, he was equally ready with an apt reply; nor could they disturb his good humor; and his smiling irony!—the rash fool who sought to deride him always found the laugh turned upon himself.

Throughout the East the party was stirred to mighty enthusiasm, and their antagonists, who had thought the election a foregone conclusion, were roused from their security. Again the combat deepened and entered upon a yet hotter phase. Meanwhile Mr. Goodnight, Mr. Crayon, and their powerful faction within the party, kept quiet for the time. Mr. Grayson was not yet treading on their toes, but he knew, and his friends knew, that they were watching every motion of his with a hundred eyes. Churchill's *Monitor* was constantly coming, laden with suggestion, advice, and warning, and Churchill himself alternately wore a look of importance and disappointment. No one ever made the slightest reference to his wise despatches. He had expected to be insulted, to be persecuted, to be a martyr for duty's sake, and, lo! he was treated always with courtesy, but his great work was ignored; he felt that they must see it, but then they might be too dull to notice its edge and weight. He now drew a certain consolation from his silent suffering, and strengthened himself anew for the task which he felt required a delicate and thoughtful mind.

Harley wrote several times to Sylvia Morgan, both at Bois  and at her aunt's home—long, careful letters, in which he strove to confine himself to the purely narrative form, and to make these epistles interesting as documents. He spoke of many odd personal details by the way, and even at the distance of two thousand miles he continued to touch the campaign with the breath of life, although told at second-hand.

The replies came in due time, brief, impersonal, thanking him for his trouble, and giving a little news of Mrs. Grayson, "King" Plummer, and herself. Harley was surprised to see with what terseness, strength, and elegance she expressed herself. "Perhaps there is a force in those mountains which unconsciously teaches simplicity and power," he found himself thinking. He was surprised, too, one day, when he was packing his valise for a hurried start, to see all her letters reposing neatly in one corner of the aforesaid valise. "Now, why have I done that?" he asked; "why have I saved those letters? They take up valuable space; I will destroy them." But when he closed the valise the undamaged letters were still neatly reposing in their allotted corner.

Now the campaign in the East came to its end, and their special train swung westward into the states supposed to be most doubtful—first across the Mississippi, and then across the Missouri. The campaign entered upon a new phase amid new conditions—in a new world, in fact—and it required no intuition for Harley to feel that strange events were approaching.

VII

HIS GREATEST SPEECH

It was the candidate's eighth speech that day, but Harley, who was in analytical mood, could see no decrease either in his energy or spontaneity of thought and expression. The words still came with the old dash and the old power, and the audience always hung upon them, the applause invariably rising like the rattle of rifle-fire. They had started at daylight, hurrying across the monotonous Western plains, in a dusty and uncomfortable car, stopping for a half-hour speech here, then racing for another at a second little village, and then a third race and a third speech, and so on. Nor was this the first day of such labors; it had been so week after week, and always it lasted through the day and far into the darkness, sometimes after midnight. But there was no sign to tell of it on the face of the candidate, save a slight redness around the edge of the eyelids, and a little hoarseness between the speeches when he talked to his friends in an ordinary tone.

The village in which Grayson was speaking was a tiny place of twelve or fifteen houses, all square, unadorned, and ugly, standing in the centre of an illimitable prairie that rolled away on either side exactly like the waves of the sea, and with the same monotony. It was a weather-beaten gathering. The prairie winds are not good for the complexion, and the cheeks of these people were brown, not red. On the outskirts of the crowd, still sitting on their ponies, were cowboys, who had ridden sixty miles across the Wyoming border to hear Grayson speak. They were dressed exactly like the cowboys of the pictures that Harley had seen in magazine stories of the Western plains. They wore the sombreros and leggings and leather belts, but there was no disorder, no cursing, no shouting nor yelling. This was a phase that had passed.

They listened, too, with an eagerness that few Eastern audiences could show. This was not to them an entertainment or anything savoring of the spectacular; it was the next thing to the word of God. There was a reverence in their manner and bearing that appealed to Harley, and he read easily in their minds the belief that Jimmy Grayson was the greatest man in the world, and that he alone could bring to their country the greatness that they wished as much for the country as for themselves. Churchill sneered at this tone of the gathering, but Harley took another view. These men might be ignorant of the world, but he respected their hero-worship, and thought it a good quality in them.

They heard the candidate tell of mighty corporations, of a vague and distant place called Wall Street, where fat men, with soft, white fingers and pouches under their eyes, sat in red-carpeted offices and pulled little but very strong strings that made farmers on the Western plains, two thousand miles away, dance like jumping-jacks, just as the fat men wished, and just when they wished. These fat men were allied with others in Europe, pouchy-eyed and smooth-fingered like themselves, and it was their object to own all the money-bags of the world, and gather all the profits of the world's labor. Harley, watching these people, saw a spark appear in their eyes many times, but it was always brightest at the mention of Wall Street. That both speaker and those to whom his words were spoken were thoroughly sincere, he did not doubt for a moment.

Grayson ceased, the engine blew the starting signal, the candidate and the correspondent swung aboard, and off they went. Harley looked back, and as long as he could see the station the little crowd on the lone prairie was still watching the disappearing train. There was something pathetic in the sight of these people following with their eyes until the last moment the man whom they considered their particular champion.

It was but an ordinary train of day cars, the red plush of the seats now whitened by the prairie dust, and it was used in common by the candidate, the flock of correspondents, and a dozen politicians, the last chiefly committeemen or their friends, one being the governor of the state through which they were then travelling.

Harley sought sleep as early as possible that night, because he would need all his strength for the next day, which was to be a record-breaker. A tremendous programme had been mapped out for Jimmy Grayson, and Harley, although aware of the candidate's great endurance, wondered how he would ever stand it. They were to cut the state from southeast to northwest, a distance of more than four hundred miles, and twenty-four speeches were to be made by the way. Fresh from war, Harley did not remember any more arduous journey, and, like an old campaigner, he prepared for it as best he could.

It was not yet daylight when they were awakened for the start of the great day. A cold wind moaned around the hamlet as they ate their breakfast, and then hastened, valise in hand, and still half asleep, to the train, which stood steam up and ready to be off. They found several men already on board, and Churchill, when he saw them, uttered the brief word, "Natives!" They were typical men of the plains, thin, dry, and weather-beaten, and the correspondents at first paid but little attention to them. It was common enough for some local committeeman to take along a number of friends for a half-day or so, in order that they might have a chance to gratify their curiosity and show their admiration for the candidate.

But the attention of Harley was attracted presently by one of the strangers, a smallish man of middle age, with a weak jaw and a look curiously compounded of eagerness and depression.

The stranger's eye met Harley's, and, encouraged by his friendly look, he crossed the aisle and spoke to the correspondent.

"You are one of them newspaper fellers that travels with Grayson, ain't you?" he asked.

Harley admitted the charge.

"And you see him every day?" continued the little man, admiringly.

"Many times a day."

"My! My! Jest to think of your comin' away out here to take down what our Jimmy Grayson says, so them fellers in New York can read it! I'll bet he makes Wall Street shake. I wish I was like you, mister, and could be right alongside Jimmy Grayson every day for weeks and weeks, and could hear every word he said while he was poundin' them fellers in Wall Street who are ruinin' our country. He is the greatest man in the world. Do you reckon I could get to speak to him and jest tech his hand?"

"Why, certainly," replied Harley. He was moved by the little man's childlike and absolute faith and his reverence for Jimmy Grayson as a demigod. It was not without pathos, and Harley at once took him into the next car and introduced him to Grayson, who received him with the natural cordiality that never deserted him. Plover, the little man said was his name—William Plover, of Kalapoosa, Choctaw County. He regarded Grayson with awe, and, after the hand-shake, did not speak. Indeed, he seemed to wish no more, and made himself still smaller in a corner, where he listened attentively to everything that Grayson said.

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