

Pro Bono Publico

A SUFFRAGETTE STORY

By ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

Continued from Last Week

The governor gazed at her, horrified, for a moment; then his political craft came to his aid, and he laughed.

"What does she look like?" he inquired.

"Is she rather a tough old lady?"

"No, she's young and—athletic."

"Barrel-shaped?"

"Oh, she's as tall as the governor is—about six feet, I believe."

"Nonsense!" he exclaimed, paling.

"Six feet," she repeated carelessly.

"Rowed stroke at Vassar; carried off the standing long jump, pole-vault and ten-mile swimming."

"This—this is terrible," murmured the young man, passing one gloved hand over his dampening brow.

Then, with a desperate attempt at a smile, he leaned forward and said confidentially:

"As a matter of fact—just between you and me—the governor is an invalid."

"Impossible!" she retorted, her clear, blue eyes on his.

"Alas! It is only too true. He's got a very, very rare disease," said the young man sadly.

"Promise you won't tell?"

"Y-yes," said the girl. Her face had lost some of its color.

"Then I will confide in you," said the young man impressively.

"The governor is threatened with a serious cardiac affection, known as Lamour's disease."

She looked down, remained silent for a moment, then lifted her pure gaze to him.

"Is that true—Captain Jones?"

"As true as that I am his military secretary."

Her features remained expressionless, but the color came back as though the worst of the shock were over.

"I see," she said seriously. "Professor Challis ought to know of this sad condition of affairs. I have heard of Lamour's disease."

"Indeed, she ought to be told at once!" he said delightedly.

"You'll inform her, won't you?"

"If you wish."

"Thank you! Thank you!" he said fervently.

"You are certainly the most charmingly reasonable of your delightful sex. The governor will be tremendously obliged to you—"

"Is the governor—are his—his affections—to use an obsolete expression—fixed upon any particular—"

"Oh, no!" he said smiling. "The governor isn't in love—except—er—generally. He's a gay bird. The governor never, in all his career, saw a single specimen of your sex which—well, which interested him as much—well, for example," he added, in a burst of confidence, "as much, even, as you interest me!"

"Which, of course, is not at all," she said, laughing.

"Oh, no—no, not at all—" he hesitated, biting his mustache and looking at her.

"I'll tell you one thing," he said. "If the governor ever did get entirely well—er—recovered—you know what I mean?"

"Cured of his cardiac trouble—this disease known as Lamour's disease?"

"Exactly. If he ever did recover, he—l'm quite sure he would be—" And here he hesitated, gazing at her in silence. As for her, she had turned her head and was gazing out of the window.

"I wonder what your name is?" he said, so naively that the color tinted even the tips of the small ear turned toward him.

"My name," she said, "is Mary Smith. Like you, I am Militant Secretary to Professor Elizabeth Challis, President of the Federation of American Women."

"I hope we will remain on pleasant terms," he ventured.

"I hope so, Captain Jones."

"Noncombatants."

"I trust so."

"Even f-friends."

She bent her distractingly pretty head in acquiescence.

"Then you'll give me back the papers?"

"I'm sorry."

"Sorry for taking them?"

"No, sorry for keeping them."

"You don't mean to say that you are going to keep them, Miss Smith?"

"I'm afraid I must. My duty forces me to deliver them to Professor Challis."

"But why does this terrible and strapping young lady desire to swipe the draft of this bill?"

"Because it contains the evidence of a

wicked conspiracy between the governor of New York, the mayor of this city and an abandoned legislature. The women of America ought to know what threatens them before this bill is perfected and introduced. And before they will permit it to be debated and passed, they are determined to march on Albany, half a million strong, as did the heroines of Versailles!"

She stretched out her white-gloved hand with an excited but graceful gesture. He eyed her moodily, swinging the chemise cat by its fluffy tail.

"What do they suspect is in that bill?" he said, at last.

"We are not yet perfectly sure. We believe it is an insidious attempt to sow dissension in the ranks of our sex—a bill cunningly devised to create jealousy and unworthy distrust among us—an ingenious and inhuman conspiracy to disorganize the National Federation of Free and Independent Women."

"Nonsense," he said. "The bill, when perfected, is designed to give you what you want."

"What?"

"Certainly; votes for women."

"On what terms?" she asked incredulously.

"Terms? Oh, no particular terms. I wouldn't call them terms," he said craftily.

"That sounds like masculine dictation."

"It certainly does."

"Of course. There are no terms in it. It's a—a sort of a civil-service idea—a kind of a qualification for the franchise—"

"Oh!"

"Yes," he continued pleasantly, "It a—er—suggests that a vote be accorded to any woman who, in competition with others of that election district, passes the examinations—"

"What examinations?"

He twirled the cat carelessly.

"Oh, papers on various subjects. One is chemistry."

"Chemistry?"

"Yes—that part of organic chemistry which includes the scientific preparation of—er—food."

Her eyes flashed; he twirled the cat absently.

"Yes," he said, "chemistry is one of the subjects. Physics is another—physical phenomena."

"What kind?"

"Oh—the—the proposition that nature abhors a vacuum. You're to prove it—you're given a certain area, say a bedroom full of dust, then you apply to it—"

"I see," she said, "You mean we apply to it a vacuum cleaner, don't you?"

"Or," he admitted courteously, "you may solve it through the science of dynamics—"

"Of course—using a broom!" Her eyes were beautiful but frosty.

"Do you know," he said, as pleasantly as he dared, "that you, for instance, would be sure to pass?"

"Because I'm intelligent enough to comprehend the subtleties of this—bill?"

"Exactly." He swung the cat in a circle.

"Thank you. And what else do these examination papers contain?"

"Physics, mostly—the properties of solid bodies. For example, you take a button—any ordinary button," he explained frankly, as though taking her into his confidence, "say, for instance, the plain, bone button of commerce—"

"And sew it onto some masculine shirt," she nodded, as he sank back, apparently overcome with admiration at her intelligence. "And that," she added, "no doubt is intended to illustrate the phenomenon of cohesion."

"You are perfectly correct," he said with enthusiasm.

"What else is there?" she asked.

"Oh, nothing—nothing very much. A few experiments in bacteriology—"

"Sterilizing nursing bottles?"

"How on earth did you ever guess?" he cried, overwhelmed, but perfectly alert to the kindling anger in her blue eyes.

"Why, of course that is it. It is included in the science of embryotics—"

"What science?"

"Embryotics. For instance, you take an embryo of any kind—say a—a baby. Then you show exactly how to dress.

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