

## MAYOR PRO TEM.

The Work of the Twin Brother.

"It heads, I go." And he spun a dollar on the desk. The face of the female that masquerades as the goddess came up.

Dick was gambling with himself over attending a lawn party, for which mild dissipation he had little taste. If it had been a baseball game now, or a football match, or a boxing contest—anything with "go" in it—but a lawn party! Just the sort of dopy affair that Jack likes to snuggle up against," growled Dick, closing his desk with a bang. "You may shut up shop," he said to his Ganymede, "I'm going out to a Tuxedo single grind."

"Dick's twin brother, John Fowle, was his exact image, but mentally they were wholly unlike. In their boyhood the latter was called the tame Fowle, to distinguish him from Dick, the wild one, but the brothers had reached the parting of the ways long ago. It was written that John should be selected mayor of a thriving inland city, while Dick dabbled in stocks and enjoyed himself hugely on a small income, and if his way of life savored of the world, the flesh and the devil, there was, at least, no canting hypocrisy in it.

Since their paths had parted at right angles, Dick rarely saw his good brother, which was just as well for the latter's peace of mind; therefore, the Honorable John was not at all distressed when he saw his brother face face at the lawn party.

"Hello, Jack," cried the wild one, "when did you fly the coop?"

"I came to the city this morning, Richard," replied the mayor gravely, "and having some little time at my disposal I accepted an invitation to come out here."

"All right," said Dick, taking his brother's unwilling arm, "come up to the house and have a joint."

"Excuse me, but—"

"Well! Did you come out here to play lawn tennis?"

"Certainly not. But I have no desire to mix with any run-and-brandy crowd."

"So?" interrupted Dick. "When do you return to your home?"

"I start for home tomorrow night."

"Then you will be in town this evening?"

"I hardly think so. The fact is, Richard, I don't care to be where a wire can reach me."

"The device you say, you haven't been looking a bank?"

"Richard,"

"Or eloping with somebody's wife?"

"No, I haven't!" snapped his honor.

"The reason, if you must know, is that the aldermen vote tomorrow on a certain measure, and I thought best to be away on business at the time."

"Um!" mused Dick. "What is the measure?"

"Oh, impatiently, 'something you would not understand. It's a sort of contract.' And the honorable John moved away, leaving his brother in a brown study. 'Crooked work,' he thought, 'and if Jack has a hand in it—'

Suddenly an idea came to him. Either the adversary or John's guardian angel was responsible for it—either can never be sure about such things—aided, perhaps, by the several 'Manhattans' that Dick had imbibed.

And that is why the wild Fowle boarded the Pacific Express at 9 o'clock that night and found himself at a seasonable hour on the following morning in the city where his eminent brother had stayed.

"I'll be mayor and run the street for a few hours, anyhow," thought Dick, "and if Jack is mixed up in anything shady, I'll bear the market and block the game."

Dick experienced his first taste of power and position in the restaurant where he breakfasted. The proprietor himself bowed him to a seat, and his order was served with refreshing speed.

"Now for the city hall and trouble," thought Dick, as he sallied forth.

But trouble came before he reached the mayor's office, for he had scarcely turned into the street when a large man, with a face suggestive of cloves and things, planted himself aggressively before him, saying: "How's this, eh? I thought you were to stay out of sight until—"

"Had to come back—private business,"

"Oh, very well," said the big man, falling in step. "Course it's your own affair, but you seemed so blamed anxious to keep your own skirts clean; say, 'impatiently, 'Sullivan's talking out loud!'"

"That so?"

"Th-huh—blast him! Blew off at a meeting over on the West Side last night—"

"Are you sure?" Dick was feeling his way.

"Course I am. Sullivan made a regular to do 'em a lot of swaggle about unholo combinations, municipal robbery and all that. But I've got a grip on Meech, and if he tries to bolt I'll squeeze 'em."

Dick reflected. "It's a blind pool I'm in on, but this big lobster is crooked fair for all right."

"F course," continued the other, "we can smash 'em through without Meech, but his wobbles will scare some others, so we've got to choke him off."

"All right, I'll see Meech myself," volunteered Dick.

"What?" The companion stared at him in wild-eyed amazement.

"You heard me," calmly.

"Yes, I heard," retorted the other, "but hang me if I understand. Just zore you let me say, 'Eke, 'Meech's Burke, must remember'—"

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"And now," interrupted Dick, "I see I'm needed here."

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"Keep mum," said Dick with a knowing wink.

"Oh, I'm fly," answered Burke. "Been there myself a few, so don't think some thing worse of me. Now don't forget—the thing goes through this afternoon. So long. Ho! Ho! Ho! You're all right." And Burke lumbered away.

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There was a door signed "Mayor's Office" across the hall. "The throne room," commented Dick. "Enter the King."

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"I'm tellin' you his nibs ain't here," he was saying. Then, catching a sight of Dick, he ejaculated: "Fully gey!" and dove into an adjoining room.

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"What show?" inquisitively.

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Dick received his visitors cautiously and sent the boy after a box of cigars.

"Good ones, mind you, or there'll be a visited kid in your family," and the freckled urchin fled in amazement. John never smiled during business hours.

"He's off his line for keeps," commented the youth as he looked at the "scale" which he received on his return. John never tipped anybody.

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"Well, sir," began Sullivan, fingering his cigar awkwardly, "you've received a much cordialness, an 'we're holdin' it for you. Now here's Meech, an honest man, as ye know, who wants to do what's right. An' a believe ye're honest, too, in 'th' main."

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"Then you doubt Burke's honesty?"

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Dick glanced at Meech, who sat with bowed head, nervously rubbing his hands together. Sullivan grasped the situation. "Perhaps ye'd like more aisy in private," he remarked discreetly, and without waiting for a reply he tip-toed from the room.

There was silence for a little time, when Meech said slowly: "I came to see you today, John, because Nellie insisted that I should do so. I had already decided to vote against the bill in spite of Burke's threats."

"What does he threaten?"

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"I'll do it!" with sudden fervor. "And I'll smash it so thoroughly that—"

"I say," he went on doubtfully, "do you think they are strong enough to pass it? My particular belief is that they are not. There are a couple of others—Jones and Davis—who could not be bought, yet may be bullied into voting for it. Now, if they think that you'll back them up, they'll be 'Wont I, though?' interrupted Dick. 'I'll be with them to the last call, I'll wipe Burke and his whole little coterie clean off the board.'"

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"Never mind that. You tell Jones and Davis that I'll back them up, and they vote against the grab. And another thing. Tell Nellie I haven't changed in the least—I call it don't care the weight of a fly's tail tomorrow night, if nothing happens."

"All right, John, and it's a pleasant message to carry. God bless you! There was a happy look on Meech's face as he left the room.

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When the big fellow strode in a few minutes later, with an air of owning over preliminary, Dick wasted no time over preliminaries. "Look here, Burke," he said, "that franchise scheme of yours is a plain, old-fashioned steal, and it doesn't go. See?"

Burke glared with fierce amazement. Then he blurted out: "What the dickens do you mean?"

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