

more, and there was no use trying to make you. When mother's letter came to-day it made me feel ashamed for I could see where I had made a big mistake by being too taken up with the children and the house and too tired out to be a companion to you any more. . . . I didn't know what to do but thought I would make a little festival to-night, just for you and me, and try to tell you how I missed your comradeship. Then Lance came while I was waiting for you and when you did put in an appearance—she hesitated and kept her face hidden on his shoulder. Ned's lips were dry as he said tensely "Go on, Mydra."

"Well, Ned, I—I thought you seemed to think that the especial care I had taken with my appearance, and the dinner, and everything was on Lance's account, and that part hurt—then I couldn't say what I had intended to you and felt so sadly disappointed over it all!"

Ned's face showed a conflict of emotions as his wife stopped speaking and his arms closed more securely about her. After a pause he said:

"Poor little girl, to think that my thoughtlessness, or selfishness rather, has caused you such unhappiness but only let me and I will try and make it all up to you darling," and as if to seal his vow, he kissed her passionately and held his face close to hers.

Silence reigned and during those moments a load of bitterness and blindness was buried forever and above them flourished an understanding and ennobling love.

Before they said good-night again, Mydra, with eyes full of mischief, asked laughingly:

"Will you send the plumber up to-morrow Ned?"

The clock struck two.

"Not to-morrow but to-day, dear," he answered.

A Pure Election

By Marvin Leslie.

IT was the evening before the day before the general election, and President Harper of the "Out" Association in the County of Lecompte was presiding over the final meeting of the party workers.

The report of the Finance Committee distributing the funds among the different polling places had been presented and the workers were dividing up the "Mission Field" for election day.

"Mr. Logan will take the Bristol poll," Harper announced.

"Pretty tough ground," remarked the Secretary.

"We've never got a majority there yet," supplied the Chairman of the Finance Committee.

"How are the other fellows fixed for cash?" asked Logan.

"Our spy on their committee says that they have \$1,500 and the promise of \$300 more," replied one of the up-river men.

"Jack Clayton usually handles their money there, too," averred another.

"We will expect you to come out even this time," declared the President.

"Come out even," exclaimed Logan. "Do you imagine a fellow can fight Jack Clayton and \$1,800 on his own ground with \$500 and a feeling of optimism and come out even? It's a political impossibility."

"If you don't care to try," replied Harper, "I've no doubt Mr. Winton would undertake the job."

"Is it possible that Grace really cares for Winton, and is her father trying to favor him in this matter?" Logan asked himself as he looked across the table and caught the supercilious sneer on Winton's handsome dissipated face.

"Well, what do you say?" asked Harper impatiently.

"I'll go," said Logan coldly, "but if \$500 is all you can spare you might as well keep it and give it to the Salvation Army."

The next afternoon Logan got off the up express at Bristol station and was promptly picked up by the local committee who proceeded to enlighten him on local conditions.

That evening they held a final meeting and checked over the list, the last count showing 160 "Outs," 180 "Ins." and 22 "Doubtfuls."

"The whole thing depends on them 22 men," declared the local President with more emphasis than grammar.

"How are their sympathies on general principles?" Logan asked.

"They all lean our way," was the reply, "and if we had dollar for dollar we could hold them flat."

Logan smiled grimly as he thought of the paltry roll of bills in the grip at his hotel. If he were to come out even it would have to be a battle of wits and not of wealth.

"If they are with us," he suggested, "why can't we get them to take the other fellow's money and vote for Smith?"

"We used to do that," exclaimed one of the committee, "and it made it very cheap for us, but since Jack Clayton's been coming up here he's worked some new scheme so that he actually knows how they vote and they're afraid to try any funny business."

"I don't see how he beats the secret ballot if our inside men are on their job," said Logan.

"Neither do we," was the reply, "but every time a man votes for us and tries to get any money from them they tell him just how he voted and they never miss it either."

The next morning the poll opened at nine o'clock and Logan, whose name had been transferred to Bristol, managed to get in first.

The returning officer and poll clerk were both rabid "Ins" he noticed, and Jack Clayton was installed as inside scrutineer.

The returning officer found Logan's name, initialled and handed him a ballot, repeating the stereotyped instructions: "Take the ballot to the secret compartment where you will find a table and pencil. If you want to vote for Broadstreet put your mark there—if for Smith put your mark there. Then fold the ballot so the mark cannot be seen and return it to me."

Logan retired to the booth and made a thorough examination, but found everything in order. No peep-holes or chances for springs or signals.

Then he turned to the table which was covered with a sheet of pasteboard securely tacked on. The pencil for marking the ballots, he noted, was of ordinary black lead but rather hard. As he marked his ballot for Smith on the table and turned it over he saw that the rather rough pasteboard and hard lead pencil had produced a raised cross on the back of the ballot, which a sharp-sighted person could notice as it went in the box and could tell by its position on the back of the ballot how he had voted.

"Probably that's where they catch on," said Logan to himself. "At any rate it's worth trying."

As soon as he came out and saw his ballot deposited in the box he turned to leave the room.

"What are you figuring on?" asked Clayton pleasantly, for he was a jovial if unscrupulous opponent.

"We'll break even," laughed Logan.

"If you do," replied Clayton, "you can have my head for a football."

When Logan reached the street he went down to the general store where he bought twenty-two lead pencils with the softest lead he could find and the same number of short wooden knitting needles, which formed a pretty good imitation of the pencils barring the lead. Then he returned to the committee room and took up his station at the window facing the polling booth.

By this time the voters were beginning to arrive and the scene was an animated one. The committeemen of both parties were among the crowd and as soon as a loaded team came in from the country the voters were promptly "nailed" by the zealous workers.

Logan felt his pulse quicken as he surveyed the busy shifting crowd. "Surely," he reflected, "politics has its sordid side, but it's a man's game after all."

The secretary of the local committee hurried in.

"Give me \$5 for Jesse Foster."

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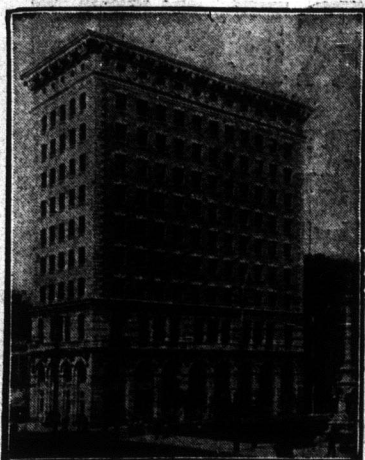
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