

The Propitious Moment — (Le Bon Moment).

(Translated from the French of Jules Chancel.)

By B. W. T.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

A Visitor.
A Messenger.
A Cabinet Minister.
An Old Clerk.
A Young Clerk.
Marescot.

Scene: A Departmental office, regulation office furniture and decorations. Two desks are occupied, the first by the young clerk, who is engaged in polishing his nails.

Time: Winter, about four p.m. The door opens, showing the messenger talking to a visitor.

Messenger (pointing to one of the vacant desks) — No, sir, your friend, Mr. Marescot, is not at his desk.

Visitor—How tiresome; I wanted to see him on urgent business.

Messenger (amiable and condescending)—If you care to wait, — perhaps he will come in...

Visitor—Yes... quite so... I'll wait for him. (Messenger goes out, the visitor seats himself on the chair which the old clerk has indicated, without leaving his seat. Silence).

Visitor (in a timid voice at the end of fifteen minutes)—Pardon me, gentlemen, but do you think M. Marescot will be in again this afternoon?

Young Clerk—Probably.

Old Clerk (gravely)—He will be sure to come back.

Visitor—An important piece of work, perhaps?

Old Clerk—No; it's pay-day!

Visitor—Ah! very well... I'll wait then... (Another silence. The two clerks tip back their chairs and seem to show by their attitudes that they are disposed to enter into conversation with the friend of their col-

league, Mr. Marescot. The visitor understands the invitation and breaks the silence).

Visitor—You are well off in this Department!

Young Clerk—Pooh, there are better ones.

Old Clerk—Promotion is very slow.

Visitor—All the same, you don't need to complain... I'd like to be in your place. Oh! to have a government job! It's always been my dream!! but I never had enough political pull to get one.

Young Clerk—Political pull is of great use with the Minister we have! Look here, sir, I, with the pull I have, should be, at least, in B of the First, but have I got it? Hardly! There is nothing to be done when you are under that sort of a crank. He pretends to weed the sheep from the goats himself, to judge a man by his work, reward him accordingly, etc., etc. What folly!

Old Clerk—If that is *his* hobby, they all have one. I knew a Minister who would only appoint blond clerks, another who only promoted near-sighted men, he pretended that only the near-sighted ones looked closely into anything... Yes, I've seen Ministers and whims come and go for the last twenty-five years!

Visitor—You speak in vain; it's better to be a civil servant than an insurance agent.

Old Clerk—That's a fact; we are better off here.

Visitor—By the way, why don't you think about taking out a policy on your life, you who enjoy a fixed income? (Starts off his patter). The life of all salaried men is a capital, and all capital should be secur-