

chased. His experienced eye took in the value of the property. He saw the utter worthlessness of Schaler's scheme as applied to this section of the river. Involuntarily he put himself in Madden's position. The situation struck home to him in a new light. The idea of all the profits on a good investment going for graft, appealed to him in a way it never had before. For a moment he was one of that great body that politicians referred to as "the public"; standing outside the Ring, he found himself probing into something that was quite new to him.

"The girl was right," he muttered, "it *would* be a steal."

The Boss put in such a fortnight as he could never remember having spent before. He fished and boated and shot, and even dared Madden to go swimming down at the Bend every morning before breakfast. Could any of his worthy henchmen have seen him rowing up and down the river at sunrise in a pair of blue overalls and a flannel shirt, what prestige would he have lost!

Madden chuckled.

"If gold mining doesn't pay," he declared, "I'm going to open a sanitarium for nervous prostration. I've got a sure cure here."

Then one day, Mary awakened to a new fact. The Doctor, busy all day, left the matter of Grote's entertainment to rest very largely on her shoulders. A strong man and a womanly woman, it was only natural that they should be attracted to each other. With the instinct of her sex, Mary realized it long before Grote. Fond of boasting his contempt for anything so weakly human, the idea took longer to come home to the Boss. He blindly fancied to himself that he regarded her in about the same light as he might a trusted political lieutenant.

One morning after a long walk, when he reached the house, Grote went around to the kitchen door. Mary was busy superintending the preparation of breakfast.

"No," she replied, in answer to his expostulations, "you can't stay out here. Horace is on the veranda. There! Be careful! Now, you've upset that pitcher. Just think, if it had been full of milk. Out you go!"

And despite his protests, he was driven to the front. The Doctor, seated in a big, rattan steamer-chair, was buried in the morning papers.

"Good morning!" he cried, excitedly, as Grote came out. "Here, look at this," and he waved the paper toward the Boss.

The front page explained Madden's agitation. A bold, black heading ran across the whole top:

HAS GOVERNOR BOSTON BEEN BOUGHT?

THE BEAVER CREEK BILL SAID TO
BE A STEAL!

Three columns followed, with an explanation of the Bill's clauses, and full of a great query from end to end as to what Boston's stand might be on the matter. It was not until Grote found a sentence to the effect that the boodlers were "probably taking advantage of 'Honest' Grote's absence from the city," that he realized how he had dreaded to find his own name mixed up in it. He did not attempt to analyse his feelings; he never wondered whether he was worrying because Madden might have discovered him or whether he feared the loss of his hard-won sobriquet in the city. It was enough for him that he felt relieved.

"I ought to go to the city," he said.

"The scoundrels!" ejaculated Madden. "Mary was right, it is a steal! If the Governor signs it—"

"Well?" Grote was curious to know Madden's opinion. "What then?"

"Nothing," said the Doctor, dejectedly. "I don't suppose it would be possible to stop him if he's been bought and paid for. But if he does," he cried, springing to his feet; "if he does, he's no better than the meanest pickpocket in Sing Sing. He's a common thief!"

The Boss drew back. His face had turned an odd grey. He knew who Madden's violent denunciation struck far better than did the Doctor himself. And then as he glanced up and saw Mary standing in the doorway, he suddenly realized why he had feared to find his name connected with the affair.