

Pro Bono Publico

A SUFFRAGETTE STORY
By ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

The situation in Great Britain was becoming deplorable. The Home Secretary had been chased into the Serpentine; the Prime Minister and a dozen members of Parliament had taken permanent refuge in the vaults of the Bank of England; a vast army of suffragettes was parading the streets of London, singing, cheering and eating bon-bons. Statues, monuments, palaces, were defaced with the words "Votes for Women"; and it was not an uncommon sight to see some handsome young man rushing distractedly through Piccadilly pursued by scores of feet-footed suffragettes of the eugenic wing of their party, intent on his capture for the purposes of scientific propagation.

No young man who conformed to the standard of masculine beauty set by the Eugenic Suffragettes was safe any longer. Scientific marriages between perfectly healthy people was now a firmly established principle of the suffragette propaganda; they began to chase attractive young men on sight with the avowed determination of marrying them to physically qualified individuals of their own sex and party, irrespective of social or educational suitability.

This had already entailed much hardship: the young Marquis of Putney was chased through Cadogan Place, caught, taken away in a taxi and married, willy-nilly, to a big, handsome, strapping girl who sold dumbbells in the New American Department Store. No matter who the man might be professionally and socially, if he was young and well-built and athletic he was chased on sight and, if captured, married to some wholesome and athletic young suffragette, in spite of his piteous protests.

"We will found," cried Mrs. Blinkerly-Danksome-Hankly triumphantly, "a perfect human race and teach it the immortal principles of women's rights. So if we can't persuade Parliament to come out for us, we'll take Parliament by the slack of its degraded trousers, some day, and throw it out."

This terrible menace, delivered in Trafalgar Square, was cabled to The Outlook which instantly issued its first extra; and New York, already in the preliminary throes of a feminine revolution, went wild.

That day the handsome young governor of New York, attended by his ornamental young military secretary in full uniform, had arrived at the Waldorf-Astoria to confer with the attractive young mayor of the metropolis, concerning a bill to be introduced in to the legislature, permitting the franchise to women under certain conditions. And on the same day a monster suffragette parade was scheduled. Some provisions of the proposed measure, somehow or other, had become known to the National Federation of Women; and as the governor, his military secretary, and the mayor sat in earnest conference in a private room at the Waldorf, the most terrible riot that New York ever saw began on Fifth Avenue just as the head of the parade, led by the suffragette band of one hundred pieces, arrived at the hotel. The governor, mayor and secretary rushed to the windows; acres of banners waved wildly below; cheer after cheer rent the raw March atmosphere; in every direction handsome young men were fleeing, pursued by eugenists. Under their very windows the shocked politicians beheld an exceedingly good-looking youth seized by several vigorous and beautiful suffragettes, dragged into a taxi, and hurried away toward a scientific marriage, kicking and struggling. This was nothing new, alas! More than one attractive young man

had already been followed and spoken to in Manhattan. Mr Dill, President of the Board of Aldermen, and the handsomest incumbent of the office that the city ever beheld, had been courted so persistently that, fearful of being picked up, he remained in hiding, disguised as a Broadway fortune-teller, where the mayor came at intervals to consult him on pretense of having his palms read.

But now the suffragettes threw off all restraint; men, frightened and confused, were being not only spoken to on Fifth Avenue, but were being seized and forcibly conducted in taxi-cabs toward the marriage license bureau. It was a very St. Bartholomew for bachelors.

"John," said the governor to his capable young military secretary, "take off that uniform. I'm going to flee in disguise."

"What does Your Excellency expect me to flee in—dishabille?" stammered the military secretary.

"I don't care what you flee in," said the governor bluntly; "but I will not have it said that the governor of the great state of New York was seized by a dozen buxom eugenists and hurried away to become the founder of a physically and politically perfect race of politicians. Get out of those gold-laced jeans!"

"I'll flee disguised as a chambermaid," muttered the handsome, rosy-cheeked young mayor. And he rang for one.

While the governor and his secretary were exchanging clothes, they heard the mayor, in the hallway, arguing with a large German chambermaid in an earnest and fatherly manner, punctuated by coy screams from the maid.

By and by he came back to the room, perspiring.

"I bought her clothes," he said. "She'll throw them over the transom."

The clothing arrived presently by way of the transom. The governor and the secretary tried to aid the mayor to get into the various sections of clothing, but as they all were bachelors and young, they naturally were not aware of the functions of the various objects scattered over the floor.

The governor picked up a bunch of curls attached to a cup-shaped turban swirl.

"Good Heavens!" he said, "the girl has scalped herself for your sake, John!"

"I bought that, too," said the mayor,

sullenly. "Do you know which way it goes on, George?"

They fixed it so that two curls fell down and dangled on either side of His Honor's nose.

Meanwhile, the unfortunate military secretary had dressed in the top hat and cutaway of the governor.

He said, huskily: "If I can't outrun them, they'll catch me and try to start raising statesmen."

"It's your duty to defend me," observed the governor.

"Yes, with my life, but not with p-progeny."

"Then you'd better run faster than you've ever run in all your life," said the governor coldly.

At that moment there came a telephone call.

"Lady at the desk to speak to the governor," came a voice.

"Hello! Who is it?" asked His Excellency coyly.

"Professor Elizabeth Challis!" came a very sweet but determined voice.

At the terrible name of the new President of the National Federation of American Women, the governor jumped with nervousness. Anonymous letters had warned him that she was after him for eugenic purposes.

"What do you want?" he asked tremulously.

"In the name of the Federation, I demand that you instantly destroy the draft of that infamous bill which you are preparing to rush through at Albany."

"I won't," said the governor.

"If you don't," she said, "the Committee on Eugenics will seize you."

"Let 'em catch me first," he replied boldly, and rang off.

"Now, John," he said briskly, "as soon as they catch sight of you in my top hat and cutaway, they'll start for you; and I advise you to leg it if you want to remain single."

The unfortunate military secretary gulped with fright, buttoned his cutaway coat, and gazed fearfully out of the window where, in the avenue below, the riot was still in lively progress. Terrified young men fled in every direction, pursued by vigorous and youthful beauty, while the suffragette band played, and thousands of suffragettes cheered wildly.

"Isn't it awful," groaned the mayor, arranging the lace cap on his turban swirl and shaking out his skirts. "The police are no use. The suffragettes kidnap the good-looking ones. Are you ready for the sortie, governor?"

The governor, in the handsome uniform of his military secretary, adjusted his sword and put on the gold-laced cap. Then, thrusting the draft of the obnoxious bill into the bosom of his tunic, he strode from the room, followed by his secretary and the unfortunate mayor, who attempted in vain to avoid treading on his own trailing skirts.

"George," said the mayor, spitting out a curl that kept persistently getting into his mouth every time he opened it, "I'll be in a pickle unless I can reach Dill's rooms. Wait! There's a pin sticking into me!"

"Too late," said the governor. "It will spur you to run all the faster. Where is Dill's?"

The mayor whispered the directions, puffing his cheeks and blowing away his curls as it incommoded him. The governor walked faster to escape. Down in the elevator they went, gazed at by terror-stricken bellboys and scared porters.

As the cheering and band-playing grew louder and more distinct, the secretary quailed, but the governor admonished him.

"You've simply got to save me," he said. "Pro bono publico! Come on, now. Make a dash for a taxi and the single life! One—two—three!"

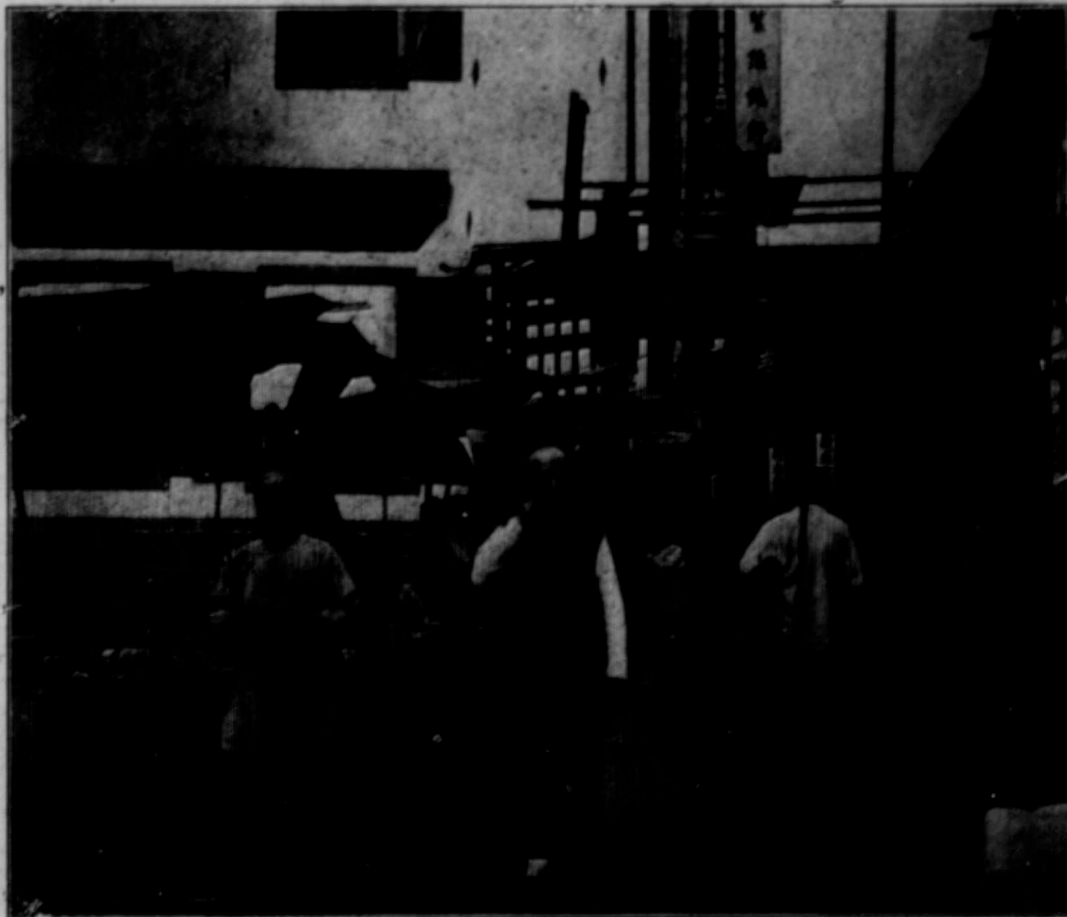
The next moment the secretary's top hat was carried away by a brick; the mayor's turban swirl went the same way, amid showers of confetti and a yell of fury from a thousand suffragettes who saw, in his piteous attempt to disguise himself by the aid of a turban swirl, an insult to womanhood the world over.

A perfect blizzard of missiles rained on the terrified politicians; the secretary and the mayor burst into a frantic canter up Thirty-fourth Street, pursued by a thousand strikingly handsome women. The governor ran west.

II.

The governor of the great state of New York was now running up Broadway with his borrowed sword between his legs and his borrowed uniform covered with confetti—footing it as earnestly as though

he were running behind his ticket, with New York County yet to hear from. After him sped bricks, vegetables, spot-eggs and several exceedingly fashionable suffragettes, their perfectly-gloved hands full of horse-whips, banners and farm produce. But His Excellency was now running strongly; one by one his eager and beautiful pursuers gave up the chase and fell out, panting and flushed from the exciting and exhilarating sport, until, at Forty-second Street, only one feet-footed young girl remained at his heels. The order of precedence then shifted as follows: first, the young and handsome governor, running like a lost dog at a fair, and clutching the draft of the obnoxious bill to his gold-laced bosom; second, one distractingly lovely young girl, big, wholesome-looking, athletic and pink of cheeks, swinging a ci-devant rat by the tail, as menacingly as David balanced the loaded sling; third, several agitated policemen whistling and rapping for assistance; fourth, the hoipolloi of the Via Blanca; fifth, a small dog; sixth, the idle wind toying carelessly with the dust and refuse and hats and skirts of all Broadway. This municipal dust-storm, mingling with the brooding metropolitan gasoline fog, produced a sirocco of which no Libyan desert needed to be ashamed;



A STREET SCENE IN SHANGHAI

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