



HERE was great excitement in Riverton and vicinity. A vacancy had occurred in the representation of the constituency in the House of Commons, and a government and an opposition candidate were already in the field. The election agent and the election patriot—the would-be

saviour of his country—were abroad; as well as the honest man who would not sell his vote for a dollar, but would conscientiously register it for five. The special correspondent, who has the supernatural power of seeing whatever he wishes whenever he wishes, flooded the columns of the newspaper with incontrovertible facts which incontrovertibly contradicted other facts equally incontrovertibly published in other newspapers; and the rival editors, with mutual expressions of esteem and affection, and after some general allusions to the servile sycophancy of journalistic hermaphrodites, arraigned each other as falsifiers of facts, grovelling office seekers or pap guzzlers, political hacks devoid of conscience, unpatriotic and detestable tricksters and boodlers, enemies to the well being of the country, and various other things too numerous to mention—all with the most polite and unanimous volubility. Riverton read the papers, and wrangled over their contents, and lauded or denounced the rival candidates and their respective parties with equal vehemence and less politeness. The political pot bubbled and bubbled, and the more the fire was stirred the more froth appeared; until a disinterested party looking on could hardly be censured for assuming that there was nothing else.

But on a certain Tuesday in October Riverton was unusually agitated. Both candidates were to speak in the village that night, and present for the consideration of the stalwart yeomanry the momentous issues of the hour. One enthusiastic gentleman was so weighed upon that afternoon by a sense of his own importance and the gravity of the occasion that he forgot to go home to supper. Another was so profoundly affected that he put on an old ragged hat with his best suit, and forgot to put on a necktie. These two lovers of humanity and foes of oppression met.



"I tell you," roared the first, "we'll lick you out of your boots!"

"I tell you," shouted the second, "you can't do it!"

"Why didn't you bring a man out?" howled the first.

"We didn't bring a ———— adventurer out, anyhow," answered the second.

"You did worse. You brought out a dirty rogue!"

"Who's a rogue? Don't you talk about rogues! A man that sticks to a party that bribed its way into power, and stays there by bribery, hadn't ought to talk about rogues. You talk about rogues! Why, your man made his money by roguery."

"Ye-e-es! You don't say so! And where—where—if I may ask—did your man get his? Hey?"

"He didn't steal it. He give value for it every time."

A crowd had gathered by this time, each member of which had some item of information he wished to add to the general fund, and in a very few minutes the private and public character of each candidate was fully exposed and commented on. Many of the facts, to which men were prepared to swear on a stack of bibles if need be, would doubtless have been news to the candidates themselves; but a public man does learn a good deal about himself from outside sources. Some vigorous voters from "way back," whose enthusiasm was stimulated by free drinks, emphasised their remarks with their fists, for the contest was one of unusual bitterness. It was noticeable that a good deal more was known, or claimed to be known, about the candidates than about the state of the country, or the policy of the respective parties. Here and there a man aired his ignorance of public affairs with supreme self-satisfaction, and a degree of "pig-headedness" proportionate to his ignorance; but the chief topic of conversation was the candidates themselves. As evening fell and the hour of the meeting approached, people crowded to the public hall, which was soon packed almost to suffocation.

Mr. Spike was the standard bearer of the government party, Mr. Snike of the opposition. Mr. Spike was tall and Mr. Snike was not.

"We'll hear the long and short of it now," facetiously remarked a citizen.

A well primed granger caught the venerable joke, chuckled over it, passed it on, and quite a quiver of amusement followed its introduction to the diaphragm of the honest voter. A gentleman named Smiler was, by the unanimous voice of the assembly, appointed chairman. Mr. Smiler was a young man who had political aspirations of his own; but, as a down-trodden and despairing country had not yet implored the intervention of his Titanic front between it and the pending stroke of doom, he was as yet an unknown quantity of the future.

"GENTLEMEN," said Mr. Smiler, "I appreciate, I assure you, the high honour of being called upon to preside in a meeting of such marked importance. I assure you that such an unexpected honour quite overwhelms me, and I hardly know in what terms to express my gratification. I will endeavour, I assure you, to perform the duties devolving upon me to the very best of my poor ability. I assure you that it is with the best possible feeling towards both candidates that I take my place here to-night. I have always taken a deep interest in political matters, and have even felt, I may frankly say, that if the time should ever come when occasion and my friends should demand it, I would be willing to sacrifice my own private inclinations for the sake of the public good. (Applause.) Gentlemen, I assure you that this evidence of

your good feeling goes to my heart. I trust that you will never find me recreant to any trust you may at any time repose in me. (Renewed applause.) Gentlemen, I am touched, I am deeply touched by your expression of feeling. It does you credit—ah—I mean that you do me too much honour, I assure you. I assure you that this is the proudest moment of my life. Gentlemen, I had not intended to speak at any length, but in view of the, I may say, the magnificent reception you have given me, I will, when the candidates have spoken, indulge in a few further remarks. I would earnestly bespeak for the gentlemen who will address you a fair and respectful hearing. These distinguished gentlemen will present for your consideration their respective views, and I doubt not that when you go from hence to whence you came—that is—I assure you, gentlemen—I—ah—I—will now introduce for your consideration Mr. Spike—or, rather, I will introduce Mr. Spike for your consideration—I mean I will now introduce you to Mr. Spike, the government candidate, who will first address you." (Prolonged applause, during which Mr. Smiler justified his name and sat down, and Mr. Spike reared himself slowly towards the ceiling.)

Mr. Spike, after a few preliminary compliments, in which the excellent chairman and the vast and intelligent audience and his honourable friend figured conspicuously, launched into his subject with much vigour. He had evidently laid in a goodby stock of rhetorical fireworks, and by the aid of his own thunder got up quite a lively storm. Respect for non-political readers, and for the cold, naked truth, prevents the insertion of anything more than his peroration in this veracious chronicle. It was as follows:—



"GENTLEMEN, I have, I think, made it clear to you that this country is on the high way to a brilliant and prosperous future; that it is almost there; that if I had a little more time and a few more figures it would be there now. I have shown you in an unmistakable manner that the present glorious administration is alone to be credited, is alone responsible, and that it is to it we owe our homage and praise and thanksgiving, our heartfelt devotion and admiration and love for our

