POOR DOCUMENT

MC 2033

THE LAW OF THE LAND

By FRED M. WHITE

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CHAPTER XXI.

At Her Gates.

Ralph was left after the departure of Dick to his own troubled thoughts, and to his own devices. He was glad enough to see Barca's back in the morning, and sincerely hoped that he would never see the fellow again. Nevertheless, he did not forget Dick's prophecy that Barca would return once more and that he was probably to be looked for that evening. It was getting towards dinner time when a somewhat mysterious telegram arrived from Charteris warning him that Barca was returning a little later, and that he was to be met in any way that Dick desired. In other words, whatever proposition, however audacious, he made to Ralph was to be acquiesced in without the slightest murmur.

There was only one thing for it, and that was to obey. If anybody could save him, Dick could. But it seemed a work of superfluous energy. What did anything matter so long as Ralph was estranged from Enid? She would never see him again, her trust in him was gone for ever. In that respect Enid was a true Charteris, with all the strange fantastic jealousy of her race. Perhaps if Ralph had confessed to the Lingen episode in the beginning all might have been well.

"And yet it is a proper ending," Ralph told himself as he sat over a solitary dinner. "To think that if I had told Enid there would have been no tragedy. Still, I have to thank God that I shall not have to explain my despair to Enid. The mere idea is terrible. Fancy her my wife! How could I have gone on day by day pretending to be happy with this awful cloud hanging over me? She would have found it out sooner or later, and then things would have been worse than ever."

Ralph was seated alone in the dining room. He had made some pretence of eating dinner and had come to the wine and fruit stage. He could eat the fruit without the sense of suffocation that more solid food gave him. Only two days before and he had joyously revelled in the artistic beauty of the old room. Everything there had been a pride and a glad delight to him. He had pictured it as perfect with the figure of Enid smiling at him from the other end of the table.

And now it was as so much Dead Sea fruit. He pushed his plate away with a bitter sigh and reached for his cigarette case. Just for an instant he hesitated as to whether he should take a further glass of wine, but he averted his eyes from the decanter. A certain solace lay in that direction; it was possible to drown sorrow and remorse there, but Ralph resolved he would not play the coward's part as yet.

Sooner or later the crime would be discovered; at any moment old Joicey might enter with the news that the body of the murdered man had been found in the grounds. Then all the fuss and the bother and the ceaseless questions would begin. And Ralph would not be able to deny that the corpse was unknown to him; that would be too dangerous. If some enemy had planned the thing with a view to breaking down his reason, why the scheme gave promise of ultimate success.

Ralph pitched his cigarette aside and wandered restlessly from one room to another. The house was singularly quiet; outside hardly a breath of wind disturbed the serenity of the perfect night. The servants had finished their day's work and were relaxing in their own quarters; Ralph had the house apparently to himself. He stood in the great hall undecided what next to do; the full light of the moon shone through the latticed windows. It looked very cool and restful and inviting outside.

To be out in the open air was better than this, Ralph decided. He looked for a cap, but none was to be seen in the hall. There was one in Ralph's dining room. He passed up the stairs; the moon flooded the corridor with light. How wonderfully still and silent it was! And then the silence was broken by a long-drawn groan.

Ralph started, his heart beating violently. He could not credit the note of pain to his heated imagination. The groan came once more, followed by a kind of yawn, and then it stopped altogether, not to be heard again. Ralph wondered where the sound came from; it was so difficult to locate sound in the dark. Finally, he decided that it came from the attics at the top of the house.

On an old oak chest stood a pair of silver candlesticks. Ralph lighted one of them, and proceeded to investigate. Most of the attics were empty save the largest one, which seemed to be crammed with furniture. Barca had declared that there were enough treasures of sorts here to furnish the house over again, and he appeared not to have exaggerated. Scores of carpets lay neatly folded, even from the backs of them Ralph could guess at their value. He must thoroughly overhaul this when he had time. Meanwhile, it was quite certain that that strange moan of pain had not come from here.

Perhaps it had been imagination after all; perhaps Ralph's heated brain had magnified the belated bleat of a lamb outside into something eloquent of tragedy. With an impatient intolerance of his own fancy, he put down the candle and walked into the garden. It was still quite early, not much past nine, and he walked on and on until he came to the gate of Charteris Park. He wondered what Enid was doing now, what she was thinking of him. Did she care much, or had she already succeeded in putting him out of her mind? A desire to know possessed Ralph; he turned into the drive until he came to the house. Beyond the lawn he could see the line of shaded lamps in the drawing room. Enid was playing some dreamy melody. He could just catch the flutter of her white dress as she sat at the piano. What a picture of refined domestic English life it was! how suggestive of happiness! Ralph was still debating over this point when a hand gripped his arm.

"What are you doing here?" a stern voice said. "This is not the first time that I——"

"I came out for a stroll, Sir Charles," Ralph said. "Did you take me for a poacher?"

"Why, bless me if it isn't Ralph Kingsmill," Sir Charles exclaimed. "I shall really have to take to my glasses in earnest. I've been shooting in glasses for two years now. And last night some confounded fellow was loafing about here and I thought that he had come back again. My dear fellow, pray come in."

It was all very pleasant and friendly, but Ralph hung back. This was the very last thing in the world that he desired. He had merely meant to linger for a moment or two, and then go home. He knew how generous and good-natured Sir Charles was.

"I ought not to come at this time of night," Ralph said. "I know what early bird you are."

"I know how late you are," Sir Charles retorted. "Upon my word, I don't know how you and Enid will get along when you are married. You like to go to bed at daybreak, which is precisely the hour at which she gets up. Really, although I am nothing of a literary man, it seems to me that here is a fine chance for making up one of those problem novels which are so fashionable nowadays. For my part, frankly, I detest them. Give me something more healthy, with a flavor of sport about it, say I. But, my dear fellow, you don't appear to be listening."

Ralph was hardly conscious of what his companion was saying. He wanted to accept Sir Charles' invitation; indeed he was eager to do so. But, at the same time, some feeling held him back. He did not feel quite equal to facing Enid, and the solitude of the evening appealed to his peculiar mood.

"I beg your pardon," he stammered. "I don't quite know what is the matter with me tonight."

"Well, you ought to be happy enough," Sir Charles laughed. "You have everything a man needs to make life pleasant and enjoyable. I only wish I stood in your shoes."

For the life of him Ralph could not prevent the bitter laugh which rose to his lips. The idea of anybody wishing to change places with him was grotesque.

"Oh, come," Sir Charles protested. "I don't like this. Now let me persuade you just for a few minutes——"

"Not tonight," Ralph pleaded. "If you will be so good as to excuse me. I—I came out to cure a racking headache. And there are reasons why I should be back early."

"All the same, you are coming in for a few minutes," Sir Charles said in his determined way. "What is the matter with the fellow? You look pale and anxious; even that I can see in this light. And Enid is out of sorts, too. Can't make the girl out at all. Come along."

Ralph hesitated and was lost. Through the open drawing room window his host dragged him, chatting pleasantly all the time. Enid looked up with a wan smile; then her slender fingers crashed on the keyboard in a harsh discord as she saw who her father's companion was. Her face was pale, her eyes were hard, but they softened a little as she saw the aching misery on Ralph's features.

"Found him hanging about outside like a poacher," Sir Charles laughed. "Said he had a bad headache, or something of that kind and refused to come in. But I wasn't going to stand any nonsense like that."

Sir Charles laughed again as if pleased with himself. He had no suspicion whatever that anything was wrong. Nothing ever troubled his imagination or his excellent digestion.

"You keep him here till I come back, Enid," he said. "Johnson is in the library. Something to do with one of the farm buildings. But I'll soon polish off Johnson."

Enid made a motion as if to detain her father. But she saw the hopelessness of it as she looked at his smiling merry face. He need never know of the troubles and sorrow. For a moment the two stood facing each other, neither caring to speak.

Enid moved slowly to the piano and back again. Perhaps she did not desire to speak, perhaps she found it almost impossible to do so. At any rate, it was some little time before she finally braced herself up to look Ralph in the face.

"Now is this kind?" she said. "Does it show anything like thought on your side? Just for this evening I was comparatively happy. I had striven to forget you, and it looked as if my efforts were going to be rewarded, and then you come along like this. Oh! do not make me despise you altogether. At any rate, be upright and manly if you can. Besides, this is a rank abuse of hospitality. What would my father say if he knew?"

"You are doing me an injustice," Ralph said. "Do you suppose that I intended to come into the house? I walked as far as here because I could not stay away. I will not remain more than a few minutes. As soon as Sir Charles returns I'll go. You are very hard and cruel, and yet, if you knew everything, I am certain that you would feel for me from the bottom of your heart."

Enid had no reply for a moment; she was not quite so cold and collected as she had thought herself to be, and there was something in the ring of Ralph's voice which touched and softened her. At the same time she had to play the woman, she had to remember what was due to her own self-respect. She was forced to turn away now so that Ralph could not see the tears that would rise to her eyes. It was only by a great effort that she managed to keep her voice under proper control.

"Why did you come?" was all she could say.

"I—I did not mean to come," Ralph stammered presently. "You know what Sir Charles is. Please go on with your playing as if I were not here."

"I couldn't," Enid said softly. "After all, perhaps it is better when Fate is too strong for us. And we shall have to meet again, we are near neighbors, and it would be better policy to remain as friends. At the same time you will see that you owe me an explanation."

"There is nothing that I should like better," Ralph said. "Miserable as I am, I feel that I should be happier for that. And God knows I have sorrow enough to carry."

The last few words broke from Ralph against his will. He had almost forgotten that he was no longer alone. Enid glanced at his pale, haggard face; the look of it thrilled her. If ever man was suffering the agony of a deep remorse it was Ralph. Despite her pride Enid's woman's heart was touched. She came a step forwards.

"I am glad you are sorry," she said. "Ralph, why did you deceive me?"

"I didn't," Ralph said helplessly. "I have not deceived you in the slightest. I told you that I loved you with my whole heart and soul, and I told you the truth."

"The truth? Yes, your voice rings true. But that other woman, the pretty innocent creature with the blue eyes. The eyes that could not lie!"

"It would seem so," Ralph went on. "If you only knew her as I do! If you could only partly guess what a consummate actress she is! But I will not ask you to take my word for it. Go to your brother; ask Dick. He knows Kate Lingen as well as I do, and better. He will tell you what sort of a woman she is."

"But the letters," Enid faltered. "She said that you had written——"

"So I did. It was the only true statement that she made from start to finish. They were written when I first began to feel the impulse to write upon me. I believed in her then, I believed that shallow soul to be my affinity. I wrote those letters because I had to write. Ah, if you could only understand the promptings of the artistic temperament! And at the time I believed every word that I said. I know now that I had erected a false Kate Lingen, a something higher and purer than any human being could be. And yet I did not love her; my passion was not the passion that I feel for you. Where my mistake lay was in not telling you everything. But I hesitated because I felt that you would not understand. But you are the only woman I have ever loved, Enid. The time came when I discovered what Kate Lingen really was, and we parted. We parted quite good friends, and for two years we have practically seen nothing of each other. It was only when Mrs. Lingen found that my position was so changed for the better that she set up that ridiculous claim. I never kissed her once all the time we were together; I never made love to her as you understand the word. But what does it all matter, why do I tell you this when nothing can make any difference between us? Only I want you to believe that I am telling you the truth."

Ralph's passionate speech stopped; he raised his haggard eyes to Enid's face. A wave of pity for him came over her. Comforting words rose to her lips. Then she could see the melting vision of Kate Lingen's loveliness, and her heart hardened again.

"I have suffered, too," she said. "It is all the harder because I have given you my affection, and you have killed all my respect for you."

CHAPTER XXII.

Warp and Woof.

"It is part of the heavy burden I have to bear," Ralph replied. "I should have told you that story. But I did not care to do so; in cold narration it would sound fantastic and absurd. And I repeat that I did not know the meaning of love till I saw you. I want you to believe that, Enid, always to feel that my heart has been yours, and yours only. You could be nothing to me now, not even if you forgave me freely. One crime leads to another, as I have found to my bitter cost. If you knew everything you would pity me."

There was no acting here, no hysterical playing up for sympathy. Ralph was suffering from some terrible trouble, and Enid's first thought was to comfort him. She had forgotten all about the tradition of her ancestors. And she loved this man—to the end she would love him, come what might. She crossed the room and laid her hand on his arm.

"Tell me, Ralph," she whispered. "I can't bear to see you suffer like this. Tell me."

"Spoken like a true woman," Ralph groaned. "I long to tell you, Enid. And yet the more I see the light of purity shining in those pure eyes of yours the more I shrink from the task. I—I could not do it. But Dick knows. And if Dick likes to tell you, he may. Tell him what I said and ask him. But don't ask me. I must get back home again, I feel that I need rest—sleep which I have not had for two nights. Let me go—I say——"

Almost roughly Ralph detached the slim figure from his arm. He was afraid to stay there any longer lest he might blurt out the whole truth. Dick would tell the story so much better than he could, would bring out all the points in his favor. He strolled quickly through the long French window and across the lawn. Almost before he had roused himself he was back at home again. All the servants had gone to bed now, for there was only a tiny spot of light in the hall and the drawing room lamp. On the table lay a telegram on a salver. Evidently it had come over by special messenger from Stonehouse. Mechanically Ralph opened it.

"Barca will return to your house by last train tonight, as I forecasted. Play entirely into his hands. See you tomorrow.—Dick."

Clearly, to make assurance doubly sure, Dick had gone to the trouble of sending another message. It was not for Ralph to wonder what brought Barca back again; it was his business to do exactly what Dick told him without demur. Doubtless Barca was coming back by the last train. As Ralph looked at the old Empire clock over the fireplace he saw that it only wanted a few minutes to eleven. In that case, Barca might be here directly. Ralph tore up the telegram and put the fragments in the grate. Then he burnt the fragments with a match, so that nothing should be left to arouse Barca's suspicions. Well, Ralph would know all about it soon. He had only to possess his soul in patience for a little longer.

Barca came presently, knocking gently at the front door. He had walked over from the station, he explained. He carried a heavy bag in his hand. He hoped that nobody had interfered with his room; he was anxious to see how his experiment was proceeding.

"You took the key away with you," Ralph said coldly. "So far as I know your room has not been touched. Would you like anything before you go to bed?"

Barca explained that he had supped in town. He went on to say that he had not the least desire to retire as yet, once he had seen that everything was right in his room he would like to have a little conversation with Ralph over a cigar. There was a kind of menace underlying the request; there was a point and hardness about Barca's speech.

"As you will," Ralph said. "Like yourself, I am not looking forward to bedtime."

Barca came down presently. He had changed into a smoking jacket, a big cigar case was in his hand. He was pleased to say that his experiment had progressed automatically in his absence. Altogether he seemed to be on very good terms with himself. And yet he was restless, his eyes gleamed, his hands fidgetted, he moved from one chair to another, talking on indifferent topics and apparently not caring to lead up to the thing that was uppermost in his mind.

"Oh, for heaven's sake, sit down," Ralph cried irritably. "You get on my nerves. Nothing worries me more than to see a man moving from one chair to another like that. It reminds one of the people on the stage. What have you to say?"

"My dear fellow, you yourself have introduced the subject," Barca said. He came to rest at length, he was quite quiet and still now. "I allude to the subject—nerves. It is a thing that most people discuss nowadays, like politics and the weather. Tell me, have you quite given up your dreams of becoming a great novelist?"

"Not at all," Ralph replied. "Only my change of position has pushed me off my balance for the time. And I have not yet got any good material for my story."

"Which brings me back to what I started from," Barca explained. "Why not make the basis of your story a study of nerves? I was thinking it all out as I came down in the train. I worked it all out for you. Shall I tell you the plot of the story I designed for you?"

Barca was speaking very quietly now. He sat perfectly still, with his cigar between his lips. There was something very suggestive and sinister about the man.

"Go on," Ralph said. "I am all attention. What you say is sure to be interesting."

"You flatter me. But I think that I shall hold your attention. So far as I know, the plot is entirely an original one. The hero of the story is all nerves and imagination, and that kind of thing. We will suppose the hero is a novelist like yourself, eh?"

"Quite so. You could not have picked out a subject more likely to suffer from the curse you allude to. I also am a man of the highest nervous temperament, Barca. But I interrupt you."

"Very well. Let me cast you for the part of hero to make the matter more plain. You have fought your way upwards until fame has come to you. With your last book fortune has trebled. If you are not altogether a rich man you are in the way of becoming so. It is necessary at this point to introduce the lovely heroine. She is all your fancy paints her, she is young, innocent of the world, and well-bred. Of course, you have had rather a shady past or your nerves would not be quite so sensitive as they are. And when you come to declare your passion for the lovely heroine, naturally you do not allude to the stormy past, over which you discreetly draw a veil. It is quite natural, most of us would do exactly the same thing in the circumstances.

"Up to the present everything is couleur de rose for the gentleman with the nervous temperament. Then at this point the adventuress comes on the scene. She comes to blackmail. She has in her possession certain letters—I regret that I could not see my way to anything more original in the way of breeding trouble, but I am only a mere amateur at the game. Those letters are going to be a source of trouble to the hero. But, as a matter of fact, the adventuress has a brother, who stole those letters, and he it is who presently comes to the hero to breed all the mischief. I hope you are listening carefully."

Ralph nodded. He was conscious of a curious tightening of the chest; he was thrilled and fascinated by the brilliancy of Barca's eyes.

"The brother comes and makes trouble. He threatens to blow the new paradise sky high with those confounded letters. He comes to the hero's house in the dead of the night, and there is trouble. The hero loses his head altogether and kills the villain. It is all done in a flash, and then the hero would give years of his life to recall the past few minutes. Then he pulls himself together and begins to consider the situation. Finally, he decided not to raise any alarm, but go quietly to bed as if nothing had happened. When the body is found by the servants in the morning, it may be assumed that a burglary has taken place, that there were two burglars in the business, who quarrelled, with fatal results to one of them. Just what a novelist would invent in the circumstances."

Ralph nodded. He could not have spoken at the moment for a kingdom.

"Very good. I am pleased to be backed up by so excellent an authority. . . . The hero goes to bed, he waits in the morning for the discovery. But the discovery does not come, nothing happens. When the hero comes down to breakfast there is no body and no sign of a struggle. Everybody behaves just as if nothing had happened. Imagine the state of mind of the hero; he is nearly mad with perplexity and remorse. Perhaps he has not killed his man, perhaps the man has crawled away to die somewhere. Perhaps his body would be discovered later, and then the whole thing would come out. Now don't you agree with me that he is a very fine background for a study of nerves? The thing is not complete——"

"Certainly it is very far from being complete," Ralph said. He was astonished at the strength and firmness of his own voice. "To bring this about there must be another ruffian who has stepped in with this diabolical scheme for depriving an unlucky mortal of his reason. No man could stand such a strain for long. To bring your parable up to date you will have to introduce this blackmailer to the audience. And here you see the clue of the plot breaking down altogether, Barca. If you drive your hero too far he might serve the blackmailer as he served the possessor of the letters."

Ralph spoke with a deeper intensity than he knew. He saw Barco rise and draw back. The man was frightened. And then Ralph roused himself. He had forgotten the telegram in the tense excitement of the moment. He changed his note, his head dropped, he looked at the ground in long and moody silence.

"You have thought of an alternate plan?" Barca asked.

"No," Ralph replied quietly. "I am wrong and you are right. There is no alternate plan. By the way, I presume you are in need of money to carry out your scientific experiment?"

"I think I have told you that before," Barca said drily. "Perhaps it would be just as well if the second villain in the story should be a scientific enthusiast like myself. It would bring the parable nearer home. And to make the parable more complete, I may as well admit that I am in pressing need of the money almost immediately. I was going to wait a little longer till my plans were more——"

"Quite so. More mature and more concrete. What do you want at present?"

Barca hesitated. He could see that Ralph's face was set, that his eyes had a red gleam in them. And he was sacrificing his own dearest ambition to please a woman whom he knew to be utterly worthless. For her he needed the sum of £3,000. He had intended to ask for that amount, but why should he be so modest?

"Five thousand pounds will do," he said. "But there is no hurry. Tomorrow——"

"Tomorrow may never come—for one of us," Ralph said hoarsely. "I'll go to the library and sign your cheque at once. Yours was a good story, Barca, but your prototype, to my thinking, was the cleverest scoundrel of the lot."

With this gibe on his lips, Ralph crossed the hall in the direction of the library. As he turned up the lamp to his great surprise he saw that Dick Charteris was seated by the table. He would have cried out aloud, but Dick laid a hand on his lips.

"Excellent," he whispered. "Splendid! Now go back to the rat again as if nothing had happened."

Imperative as Dick's speech was, Ralph still hesitated. He was so dazed and confused that he did not know what to do, though the fact was not lost upon him that Charteris was literally boiling with impatience.

"Oh, why the dickens don't you do what I tell you?" he whispered. "There you are rooted to the spot like a man who has entirely lost all command of himself, while the diamond minutes are slipping away—minutes which are as precious as drops of your heart's blood. Are you going, or do you want me to kick you along?"

"You might have a little patience with me," Ralph said. "Don't you see that I am more or less in the dark as to what is going on, and how easy it would be for me to betray myself——"

"A great deal easier to betray yourself if you knew everything," Dick said. "You are too transparent and guileless for this wicked world. Why do you fail to grasp the fact that it would be all the better for you to know nothing? You are a mere child in this business, and it is my brains that have developed it. Listen, can't you hear him moving now?"

There were certainly sounds of someone moving about outside the room, and even Ralph began to feel that his own indecision was seriously perilling the situation. He hoped that he was not too late, that he had not lingered too long.

He came back to his senses, and Dick fairly sprang up and caught him by the shoulders. A moment later and he found himself turned out of the library. He crossed the floor, and tried to compose himself and control his features.

"I will do all I can," he muttered. "Heaven grant that that rascal will guess nothing from my face."

(To be continued.)

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Put It In Some Safe Place, For It May Come Handy Some Day

Here is a simple home-made mixture as given by an eminent authority on Kidney disease, who makes the statement in a New York daily newspaper, that it will relieve almost any case of Kidney trouble if taken before the stage of Bright's disease. He states that such symptoms as lame back, pain in the side, frequent desire to urinate, especially at night; painful and discolored urinations, are readily overcome. Here is the recipe; try it:

Fluid Extract Dandelion, one-half ounce; Compound Kargon, one ounce; Compound Syrup Sarsaparilla, three ounces. Take a teaspoonful after each meal and at bedtime.

A well known druggist here in town is authority that these ingredients are all harmless and easily mixed at home by shaking well in a bottle. This mixture has a peculiar healing and soothing effect upon the entire Kidney and Urinary structure, and often overcomes the worst forms of Rheumatism in just a little while. This mixture is said to remove all blood disorders and cure the Rheumatism by forcing the Kidneys to filter and strain from the blood and system all uric acid and foul, decomposed waste matter, which causes these afflictions. Try it if you aren't well. Save the prescription.

WARNS BRYCE THAT CANADA WILL STAND NO MORE ALASKA DEALS

Guest at Montreal Banquet Startles Hearers by Blunt Remarks, But Ambassador Seemed Pleased.

Montreal, Feb. 26—Ambassador Bryce did not get away from Montreal without hearing something with regard to the sentiment of Canadians as to the habit of sacrificing Canadian interests in order to increase friendly relations between Great Britain and the United States.

At the banquet given to Mr. Bryce here last night most of the speakers avoided this subject, evidently hoping that Mr. Bryce's visit would tend to put a stop to that sort of thing. But just at the close of the banquet an incident occurred which aroused discussion afterwards. Geo. H. D. Lee, first vice-president of the Toronto Canadian Club, was called upon to respond to the toast of Sister Societies. He directed his remarks straight at the guest and after some genial persiflage proceeded to dwell upon the resources of Canada, to which Mr. Bryce had already referred.

Addressing Mr. Bryce, Mr. Lee said with significance: "Yes, we have a great heritage in Canada, a glorious heritage, but it must be remembered by everybody that from this time forward we have nothing to give away."

This direct reference to the unfortunate result of previous diplomatic efforts in which Canadian affairs were concerned was received with applause, and was evidently appreciated by the British ambassador.

Mr. Bryce was tonight the guest of the bar association at their annual banquet, and will leave tomorrow morning for Boston.

NOT ACTIVE PARTIZANS, SAYS F. M. SPROUL

Hampton, Feb. 26.—In the course of his nomination day speech Fred M. Sproul said he regretted to see in that morning's Telegraph a reference to R. H. Smith, postmaster, and H. J. Fowler, registrar of deeds, in which it was intimated that these officials were taking a lively interest in election matters and using their influence as such officials in favor of the government party. He was glad to be able to deny the allegation so far as active interference in political matters was concerned, neither of the gentlemen referred to having so far taken any part in the present campaign.

Messrs. Smith and Fowler feel that they have been personally injured by the report of their alleged partizanship and their friends think Mr. Sproul's disclaimer should be published. It is suggested that as he is an opposition candidate Mr. Sproul should be well informed in this matter.

IMPORTANT FOR MEN

If you suffer from any secret weakness, you can be easily and quickly cured, if you will write in confidence to Dr. G. H. Bobertz, 564 Woodward avenue, Detroit, Mich.

You will receive by return of mail, in plain sealed envelope, important information that will with certainty lead to a positive cure.

HOW THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT'S LIQUOR LICENSE EXTORTION POLICY HAS COST THE CITY OF ST. JOHN $176,738.95

In Return for This They Gave the City Since 1895 Grants Amounting to $29,500, and Yet They Dare to Ask Support from City Voters.

The Hon. Mr. McKeown is prone to employ a clumsy species of sledge hammer sophistry for the purpose of disguising disagreeable facts. By such methods he, at least, finds it easy to transform the most evident government reproach into a positive boon and blessing calling for the fullest measure of the people's gratitude. But, the people know Mr. McKeown; and they are not quite so dense mentally as he apparently thinks. Briefly investigate merely one instance of the characteristic in question:

The Hon. Mr. McKeown contends that the government has bestowed a great favor upon the city of St. John, in granting $2,500 per annum towards west side improvements:

See just how much there is in this alleged favor by determining by actual figures how much more the government has taken from the city than it has yielded to it:

Grant from Province to City.

1895	3,000
1896	1,500
1897	2,500
1898	2,500
1899	2,500
1900	2,500
1901	2,500
1902	2,500
1903	2,500
1904	2,500
1905	2,500
1906	2,500
	$29,500

Liquor Licenses Extorted from City by Province under Act of 1895.

1895	
1896	$ 17,460.39
1897	15,605.00
1898	16,416.75
1899	16,255.00
1900	16,593.00
1901	16,235.00
1902	16,027.02
1903	16,030.36
1904	15,100.00
1905	15,664.43
1906	15,400.00
	$176,783.95

Taken from the city by the province	$176,783.95
Given by the province to the city	29,500.00
What the alleged government boon and blessing has cost the city of St. John in twelve years	$147,283.95

Such extravagantly expensive favors could well be dispensed with. They are too costly at the premium of almost 500 per cent required by a beneficent government. Of course, voters ought not to complain when Hon. Mr. McKeown assures them that there is every cause for gratitude.

If, however, these figures demonstrate a conclusion likely to gratify the hard-working, hard-headed citizens of St. John, then, of course, the Hon. Mr. McKeown's contention is correct; not otherwise.

To follow the matter still further: see what the government has taken out of the county of St. John in liquor licenses since the passing of the act of 1895:—

	County of St. John.
1896	$ 559.64
1897	1,081.57
1898	601.67
1899	1,020.82
1900	902.[illegible]
1901	75[illegible]
1902	49[illegible]
1903	652.[illegible]
1904	760.08
1905	689.49
1906	635.81
	$8,126.27

After all, and in spite of the Hon. Mr. McKeown's utterances, does it not seem that the city and county have done considerably better for the province than the province has done for them? Is it astonishing, therefore, that the Hon. Mr. McKeown's eloquent appeal for our unrestrained gratitude should meet with no hysterical degree of response in these parts? In plain English, is the province not tapping this city and county too freely, to its detriment? If this is so, is it not ludicrous that the Hon. Mr. McKeown and others of his present faith, should strive to delude the people by the dangling in their faces of this miserable little $2,500 annual grant, a sum merely equivalent to the sessional indemnity of five provincial members, and less than the annual salary of most branch bank managers?

When the members and adherents of the government have to seek out such flimsy causes for the gratitude of our people, then must they be compelled to straits that are indeed hard.

ROYAL HOTEL AT CAMPBELLTON BURNED

Campbellton, N. B., Feb. 25.—Fire broke out in the Royal Hotel here about 9 o'clock this morning, an alarm was sounded and the fire department was quickly on the scene but the fire had gained such headway it was utterly impossible, under the circumstances, to do anything towards saving the building and it was with great difficulty the surrounding buildings were kept from burning. Had there been a strong westerly wind blowing the town would have stood in great danger of being swept by the flames.

The fire was first noticed in the dining room by one of the servants, who immediately notified the clerk in the office, who hastened to that section of the house but on reaching there could not enter the room for smoke, the floor being all in flames.

The house was full of guests who lost all their personal belongings. The loss, including house, barn and the greater part of the furniture is estimated in the vicinity of $25,000, with only, as far as can be ascertained, $17,000 insurance. It is supposed to have caught from a defective furnace pipe.

The hotel had until recently been under the proprietorship of Wm. Sproule but on account of failing health he was compelled to give up the hotel business and rented the house to Thos. Gorman, who had for a number of years been connected with the Brunswick Hotel, Moncton. The house had, since Mr. Gorman took charge, been renovated.

The social assembly given by the C. M. B. A. last evening in their rooms, Union street, was the most successful yet held. About forty couples were present and a good programme of dances was enjoyed. An efficient committee of young men served refreshments. The chaperones were: Mrs. John McDonald, Mrs. H. Sheehan and Mrs. John M. Elmore.

OUR GREAT POLITICAL BOSS

Hon. Mr. Pugsley's Efforts to Save the Discredited Local Government, and Some of His Earlier Professions of Impartiality.

To the Editor of The Telegraph:

Sir,—As I understand it, the Hon. Mr. Pugsley, in campaigning on behalf of the local government, bases his plea on the assurance that the return of the government would "strengthen his hands." I venture to think that many of us are asking ourselves just now whether it would not be policy on the part of the province to weaken his hands a little. I confess in sorrow and humility that a short time ago I was one of many who fell a victim to the suavity of his tongue and became enthusiastic over the fact that so able a man had been secured to represent us at Ottawa. True, he suffered a great disadvantage, to my mind, in that he was, for the time being at any rate, attached to the Liberal party. But I reflected that, considering his past record, any morning's newspaper might inform us that he was a conservative once more.

His conduct since he became a minister, however, brings rather a feeling of relief that he has not yet come back to the fold. In his great oration on the occasion of his unopposed return to the dominion parliament, Mr. Pugsley promised that his efforts should be directed to the welfare of the city and the province irrespective of political considerations; yet I confidently challenge the Sun, the Star, or the moon to illumine one single instance wherein, underlying his actions, the hand of the political boss has not been discernible. The selection of his patronage committee was the first blow to the hopes of those who had looked for the exercise of the honorable gentleman's impartial judgment. It was a clear and blatant intimation that any appointment made through his influence would be guaged entirely by the appointee's past services to the Liberal party, and that ability and fitness for the position would not be even a secondary consideration.

Let us pass lightly over Mr. Pugsley's attitude towards R. L. Borden and his colleagues with regard to the alleged Conservative campaign fund. His own scathing denunciation at the hands of the opposition leaders he accepted like a well-whipped school boy, and Mr. Borden's honest and fearless challenge he never dared to accept. Early discredited, he silently shuffled away from this hornet's nest in a fashion which unpleasantly reminded one of the inglorious retreat of his colleague, the Hon. H. R. Emmerson, in the matter of his notorious libel suit.

Now, come to more recent times and read between the lines. All his beneficent actions were, strangely enough, coincident with or closely following the announcement of the date of the provincial elections. Mayor Sears' gushing public expression of gratitude for St. John's magnificent "New Year's present" of wharves reads like a stream of castor oil; but there are some who are sceptical enough to believe that Mr. Pugsley's zeal will suffer modification after Tuesday next, whichever way the cat jumps.

Again, watch the little deal over the Martello hotel, which has been taken over by the government as a detention hospital, on terms upon which only the proprietors are to be congratulated. Everybody knows that the hospital will not be used until next winter, if ever it is, and everybody knows that its steward was a faithful servant of the Liberal party, who has waited patiently for a long promised reward. Once more we find that the consummation of the deal was coincident with the announcement of the approaching elections. Of course nobody blames the steward, but it is another item in what goes to make up the Liberal idea of government, and which is but one long course of graft and political favoritism. And I suppose that we shall soon learn that Mayor Sears, in compensation for his graceful withdrawal from opposition to Mr. Pugsley and the energetic though unsuccessful scrap he put up in the provincial election, has been rewarded with the position of postmaster, an office for which Mayor Sears himself does not pretend to the slightest qualification.

One might go on for a long time with examples in which Mr. Pugsley, during his brief ministry, has shown his hand—the hand of the political "boss;" the hand of the past master in the game of political bluff—and still fail to find the faintest indication of any intention on his part to redeem his promise of impartiality made in his velvety utterances of last year.

We all believe that when Mr. Pugsley went to Ottawa he would make a name for himself. He has made a name—an unenviable one; and I firmly believe that if he were to offer himself as a candidate in this city tomorrow he would be overwhelmingly defeated.

Relieve him of his misused power we cannot, at present; but we can on March 3 do the next best thing by rejecting the grovellers who would "strengthen his hands," who would use the public confidence as a stepping stone to their own personal ambitions, and with whom "personal interest and emolument sink every other consideration."

Yours truly,

WEST SIDER.