

## BIS: FIGHTING CHANCE

(By Agnes Louise Provost.)

"Mr. Boylan," announced the confidential clerk, inserting his head for a brief instant into Mayor Wayland's private office, and the mayor pushed back the telephone he had been using, and nodded.

"Show him in."

"B-r-r-r! B-r-r-r-r-r!"

The telephone was going again. The mayor pulled it toward him with the resignation which spells bottled impatience, and jerked his head toward a chair as the Honorable James Boylan entered.

"Hello! Hello! Yes. What say. Yes. Sure, it's necessary. We don't want—Oh, I see. No the troops can't be used for that. Yes, right away. Good-bye."

He pulled a long breath and looked over at Boylan, still keeping the telephone close to him.

"I'd like to be three men, to-day, Jimmy. Then maybe one of me would get a chance to breathe occasionally. Did you come up by way of the railroad?"

"Sure. Think I'd miss that. The special stands there in the terminal, with the troops all loaded on her, but I guess that's as far as she'll get. There were about a thousand hoodlums swarming around the tracks hunting for trouble, and more arriving."

"Hump." The Mayor picked up the receiver again.

"Ten-twenty-three West."

He covered the mouthpiece with his free hand and spoke over his shoulder to Boylan.

"The railroad company is getting worried. The Government is pounding at them from the State House and the crowd is pounding at them here, and meanwhile their schedule has been put clear out of joint. The Division Superintendent just phoned down for police protection. They are afraid of a riot when the train pulls out."

"She won't pull out at all," said Boylan bluntly. "Lord, don't they realize what it means? All the other trains on the schedule will run regularly, but so far as this special goes it's a sympathetic strike. There won't be an engineer and fireman on that road or any other who will take that trainload of militia down State to hold back the P. & Y. strikers. It wouldn't matter if a dozen Governors—"

Boylan stopped. The Mayor had 1023 West on the wire, and the Honorable James did not have to consult the directory to find that this meant the Chief of Police.

"Hello, that you, Chapin. Yes, this is Wayland. I want you to send all the men you can spare to the terminal to keep the crowd in order. And, say! You might go yourself, to keep things smooth. Don't take any action unless you are forced into it. We don't want trouble. Yes, yes, that's it. Much obliged. Good-bye."

The receiver went back with something of a bang, and Mayor Wayland swung his chair around and stretched out his legs with the relief of a hard-pressed man who has found five minutes to call his own.

"Well, Jimmy, what news?"

"Both Houses have adjourned for the week. The election is fixed for next Monday night."

"I read that in the paper an hour ago. You're behind the times, Jimmy."

The Honorable James smiled contentedly.

"Did you read that Horner and McCullum have been coaxed over into the Wayland ranks at last? I don't think so. That makes the Hanover delegation solid for you."

Wayland drummed on the arm of his chair, and his eyes lit up.

"You have worked hard, Jimmy. I won't forget it, either, whether they send me to the United States Senate or the political graveyard. I know I'm up against a strong opposition."

"Pretty heavy," assented Jimmy, gravely. "But if you can break the ranks of the strongest man, the others won't count."

"No, they won't count. It is Heath that we must beat. The whole south of the State is solid for him, and the railroad interests are behind him. The militia is for Hammond, with a brothers here and there, and the north scatters between Weldon and me. It looks black, Jimmy, but I'll win if it is in the wood. All I want is a fighting chance."

"B-r-r-r! B-r-r-r-r! B-r-r-r-r!"

The candidate for the United States Senate turned back to the telephone. It was a long-distance call, and in the intervals of making connections he and Boylan conversed in jerky phrases on the possibilities of next Monday's session, when both Houses of the Legislature would convene to elect a United States Senator. It would take a deal of manipulation to get the requisite votes for Mayor Wayland; by that time, but they were banking all their hopes on a stampee in the Heath ranks at the last moment, to which end Mr. Boylan and his friends were working guilefully. He was a loyal henchman and an industrious gleaner of votes, and being a member of the House himself, he could cast his own to swell the number.

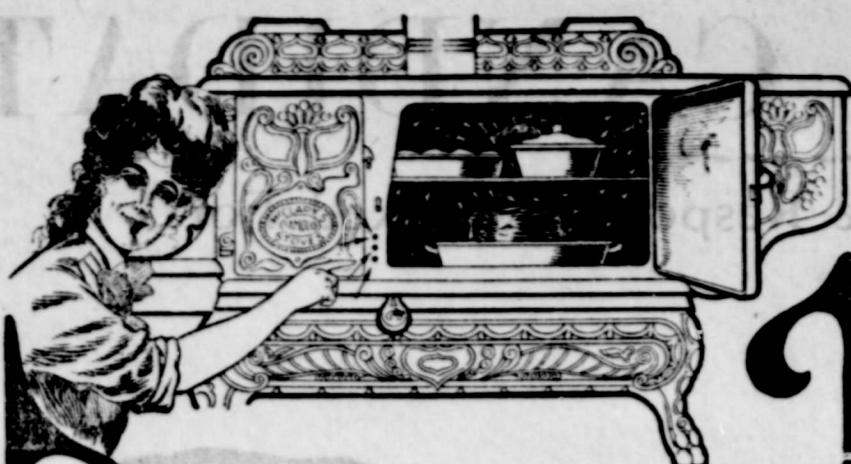
While Boylan was dropping terse bits of advice, the connection was made, and the member from Hanover County listened with the widening eyes of understanding, and a perturbed wrinkle between them.

"Hello! Hello! Yes, this is Mayor Wayland. Oh, yes, I see! Any way I can serve you, Governor. Yes, there must be a thousand down there now. I have sent the police down, but what they need is an engineer. They tell me what's that. Yes, Governor. They tell me the train is stalled here. I am very sorry, but—"

There was a pause during which the voice at the other end of the line talked rapidly. Boylan heard only a faint metallic clatter, but he watched the Mayor's face. Wayland had pleasant eyes and a boyish freshness of skin which his grayish hair merely accentuated, but he also had a slightly "undershot" jaw which suggested that he might at times be hard to manage. The under lip was thrust out now, and Mr. Boylan did not like the signs.

Presently the metallic clatter ceased. In his anxiety Boylan leaned forward to catch the Mayor's answer, each word clipped out with deliberate decision.

"Very well, Governor. The train will go out in twenty minutes, at



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most. Oh, don't mention it. Good-bye."

"My good Lord, Wayland, you're not going to interfere in the strike?"

Boylan exploded excitedly as the receiver clicked into place, but the Mayor merely rose, went to a closet and took out his hat and overcoat. The under lip still signalled danger.

"I am going to settle this question right away. The Governor has had word of another clash between the strikers and the police, and a few ugly wounds on both sides. He has ordered out the troops, and they are held up in my city. He put it to me to get them out of here, and I said I would do it."

"But you'll ruin your chances!"

Boylan stormed, struggling into his own overcoat. "We haven't anything to do with the strike up here!"

As though suddenly recollecting something, the Mayor called up the Division Superintendent again, and requested that an order be sent ahead for a clear track for the special. Then he laid a hand on Boylan's shoulder.

"I have to do it, old man, but it is up to me now. Don't you see, I am responsible for this end of the business, whether I like it or not. I'm not in law obliged to, but it is simply up to me! You know what that means. My personal sentiments about that strike don't figure in it at all. I don't like the job, but I am going to do it. Want to come and see the fun?"

They clattered hastily down the City Hall steps, and Wayland hailed a cab and gave a number in a modest little side street.

"What the devil—" commenced Mr. Boylan fretfully, and Wayland relaxed into a laugh.

"We're going to old Joe McCorry's. You know him. He used to be an engineer on this road, but he was badly mugged up in a collision, and the company pensioned him—after a little persuasion."

He did not say at whose persuasion, but Boylan thought he might guess.

"Why, he's a thousand years old, man, and crippled at that! He'll never make another run on this earth."

"He will make one more," said Wayland confidently.

"I bet he refuses. He'll side with his own kind. I don't blame him."

"He will do it this time for me."

He did. Wayland was in the little house in less than three minutes, and came out with an old man with one arm and a painful limp. His hair was quite white, but his eyes were bright and worried, and he shook his head deprecatingly. It had not been easy to choose between the Mayor and inclination.

As they neared the tracks they could see the black crowds hanging around them in the idleness which breeds mischief, but they skirted it and went in by the station entrance. As they bundled out of the cab and into the long station, the two politicians accommodating their patient steps to McCorry's limp, Boylan took the Mayor persuasively by the arm.

"See here, old man, we might as well evaporate now. You've got the engineer for them. There's no need of your showing yourself."

"I have still to get a fireman," said the Mayor calmly, and Boylan swore under his breath, as they went down the platform, past car after car packed with uniformed men, some yawning prodigiously, some cursing the strike, the delay, and the cause thereof. The crowd was massed up ahead, held back by the police from swarming into the terminal and picking trouble with the militia.

Boylan nerved himself for a final desperate plea.

"For God's sake, Wayland, don't do it! You've done all that any man could expect of you, and more. You can't afford to go further, with the election only five days off. The corporate interests are against you, anyway, and your pull with the people is your main hope. If you kill that you won't have a leg to stand on. It's suicide, Wayland."

The Mayor shook his head.

"You don't understand. It is a chance that I must risk. Without my desire, it has been put to me to see this thing through. If I am Mayor of this city, this train goes out in five minutes. If I'm not, a blamed janitor, I'll get out of politics anyway."

Boylan gave it up. If there had not been an election to the United States Senate at stake he would have been dancing excitedly and whooping his friend on, but under the circumstances, it was absolutely lunacy.

They were nearing the big, silent engine, the police were clearing a path for them. The crowd swayed and murmured and craned its numerous necks to see what was coming. McCorry, none too proud of his job, turned back on them and

clambered painfully into the cab. Instantly the voices rose.

"A-a-a-h! look at the cab!"

"That's the Mayor with him! Hey, Mayor, who's your friend?"

"Say, that's McCorry that used to work on the road. Look at old Mac playin' traitor to the boys! Wonder if he thinks he'd goin' to git out of here."

"Fraid he'll lose his pension if he don't!" some one jeered back hoarsely, and the crowd yelled its enjoyment, but it was not a pleasant mirth. McCorry had stubbornly kept his face away from them, but he let them have it, in the full blaze of silent wrath, as the last speech floated up to him, and then the sound of hissing steam deadened their jibes. Boylan leaned against a truck and surveyed the scene in black disgust, but the Mayor followed McCorry as far as the first step below the cab, from which elevation he held up his hand for silence. He got it, temporarily.

"Boys, the Governor of our state has ordered out these troops to go to another city, and they are held up here. He has asked me, as mayor, to see that his orders are carried out at this end. That is all we are interested in. You know pretty well where my sympathies lie, but you know, too, that I stand for law and order in this city. With your help this train goes out in five minutes. I have brought an engineer, who does this out of personal friendship to fireman."

The hush that followed was huge with possibilities. Then some one called out loudly: "Dis train don't move to-day, see?" and the clamor broke forth again.

In the midst of it Boylan said something very profane, deep in his throat, but the Mayor stood with narrowing eyes and out-thrust jaw, watching the crowd that defied him. They knew where his authority ended. He calmly removed his silk hat and tucked it under his arm.

"I guess I'm not too good to shovel coal," he said, deliberately, and swung himself into the cab beside McCorry.

Boylan almost fainted. He saw the Mayor's grayish head and McCorry's white one close together, heard the cries of the crowd break into a roar, then the shrill noise of escaping steam, and the train was moving. The police were pushing the crowd back, but of their own accord they melted from the tracks as the formidable engine heaved into motion. A store or two flew, and a clatter of glass in a forward car followed one of them. Boylan awoke from his stupor, grabbed at the last gliding platform and scrambled aboard.

"I'll see this thing through," he puffed grimly, divided between helpless wrath and reluctant admiration at the gallant folly of his candidate.

The Mayor of the largest city in the state had no time for coherent thought as the first jar of motion went through him. He saw the heaving sea of people break like a shallow wave at the first turning of the great wheels, heard their scattering shouts pass him and felt the engine quiver and gather speed, and then the crowd was behind him, and he was shooting through the suburbs of his own city and bending his dignified back to shovel coal. He was no longer an ex-State Senator, a present Mayor and a candidate for the highest legislative body in the land; he was a very tall fireman on the militia special, taking Joe McCorry's orders with the meekness, born of conscious ignorance.

They were gathering speed with every moment and as they lurched around a curve he staggered and smiled good-humoredly at McCorry. He had forgotten the Mayor, the crowd behind and the other crowd which would surely await them at their destination, for his crippled feet were once more on the floor of an engine's cab, the old familiar jar was running through him, and the huge, beautiful, clean-cut locomotive obeyed his fingers like a docile child. His eyes were bright and watchful, his hair was flying. No, he had not forgotten how. He never would forget. They had given him the fastest engine on the road that day, and a clear track for eighty miles. He let her out a little more, and gave a few brief orders to his fireman.

Wayland might have enjoyed the reckless sweep of speed if there had been time, but he was here for work. Suburbs vanished, and little towns and open fields went by in jerks. His back was already protesting against the unaccustomed labor, his ears were full of the roar of their progress, his eyes smarted with coal dust, but he thrust out his under lip and said nothing. The troops were already two hours late, and they needed all the speed that could be

They flashed by stations where curious little knots of people had gathered hurriedly to see the heralded special go through; they whizzed past train after train, filled with impatient passengers, shunted off to sidings to make way for their royal progress, and for the first time Mayor Wayland began to realize just what a clear track means in these days of rushing traffic.

He mopped his brow with one hand, leaving a grotesque smear behind it, and dropped into dissipated reflections.

Jimmy was right. He was killing his chances for the election, and it was only five days off. All his ambitions had been wrapped around that one thing, for which his previous offices had only been training. He knew what he could do if he got it, felt the power of strong deeds in him, if—if he only had a fighting chance. He was fighting now, but it was an unpopular mode of warfare, when a man was running for office. He knew he could have eluded the Governor's request, but—the under jaw came out again. He thought of Boylan and smiled regretfully. Good old Boylan, he had worked hard, and in a thankless cause. Wayland wondered what Jimmy was doing at that moment, not dreaming that the gentleman from Hanover was in the rear car, wedged beside a large militiaman on a small end seat, bracing his legs as they took the curves and praying that the inspired idiots ahead would not run him clear into eternity.

"We're most here, Mayor."

Wayland had guessed it himself as they swung into the suburbs of a large city, running at slightly reduced speed. He unconsciously added another smudge to his already blackened face, and put one hand on the engineer's shoulder.

"I'll stand by you, Joe. We have both had to swallow our feelings to-day."

"What's good enough for you's good enough for me," said McCorry, grimly, nor did he flinch, outwardly, at least, as they sighted the black mass of people around the station. The P. & Y. strikers were waiting, a swaying, ominous bulk, not for the troops that the special carried, but the men who had consented to bring them down here. As the train slowed to a stop a roar of scorn followed the engine like a great wave rushing thunderously up a beach.

Forgetting that his face was not known here, and thinking only that the bulk of their anger would fall on the old engineer, who had once been one of them, Mayor Wayland thrust himself into the door of the cab, blocking it completely, and faced the crowd swaying beneath him.

Whether it was aimed with deliberate intent or let fly in sudden passion, whether sped on its way to smite or merely to terrify, no one ever knew, but as Wayland appeared a jagged half of brick hurtled through the air toward the engine. The Mayor, just bending forward, took it full on the temple, and the roar of the crowd sunk to a gasp of anticipation as he swung dizzily around and pitched heavily to the platform below.

He struck his head again in falling and lay there limply, with a little red pool forming rapidly under his head. He did not move as Boylan raced forward and dropped beside him, good, impetuous old Jimmy almost crying and not ashamed of it, and huskily cursing the unknown hand. The heavy trot of feet, coming on the double-quick, jarred the platform; blue uniforms swarmed around him, and then he was on their litter and off again, still unconscious for the nearest hospital, leaving behind him the lined-up menace of militia and a discouraged crowd, which swayed and broke and melted by degrees, as the word raced from mouth to mouth that this was no less a person than Mayor Wayland of Hanover, and that they had killed him.

It was an hour later when Mayor Wayland, cleaned up and almost eclipsed under his great bandage, opened his eyes listlessly and saw Boylan beside him.

"Oh, Jimmy," he whispered. "So glad—it's you. Say, Jimmy—"

Boylan bent lower.

"I want you to get some people here."

"Oh, come now," protested Boylan solicitously. "You mustn't see anybody yet awhile. The doctors won't let you. You leave things to me."

"The doctors must. Get me—"

President of the P. & Y., this afternoon. When he's gone I want to see a deputation from the strikers."

The Honorable James Boylan was never asleep to an opportunity. His eyes opened suddenly, his mouth lowered itself, and he chuckled and made his way out almost on a run.

The evening papers all through the State made a sensational extra of it, heralding Mayor Wayland's exploit in their biggest type, and adding with a flourish that the distinguished victim—he was a victim now—had with his first return to consciousness asked to see both parties to the dispute, with a view to effecting a reconciliation in his well-known energetic way.

Even while the extras were being cried in the streets, Mayor Wayland lay with throbbing head and wrestled, first with the president of the P. & Y., and then with the deputation from the strikers, and when the last man had gone, he smiled contentedly and quietly fainted from exhaustion.

The next morning the papers announced that Mayor Wayland had rested well, in spite of his herculean efforts of the day before, but the great news of the day was that the prolonged P. & Y. strike was ended, and that he had arbitrated it. He had broken up a five weeks' strike which had indirectly crippled industries all over the State, and he had seized the precious moment when the company had been glad of this happy chance to compromise gracefully, and the men, frightened by the calmity of the day before, had not been reluctant to meet it half way.

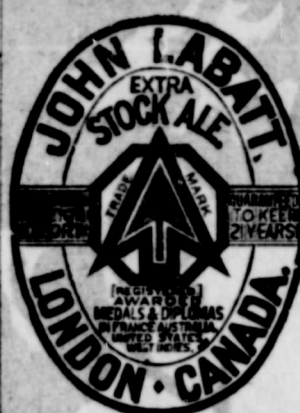
He was a great man that morning, but only four more days remained before the election and lying helpless in bed, he worried himself into a fever over his inability to be up and doing. The papers might be lauding him, the mob might be cheering him, but neither of these could cast a direct vote in Senate or Assembly on Monday next. The Heath interests looked askance at Wayland's sudden popularity, but banded together yet more firmly, with the huge lobby of the railroads surrounding them like an impenetrable wall.

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"We must break the balloting between the two Houses Monday," he said in conclusion to his friend Mr. Kane, an ex-Assemblyman of much guile and a persuasive tongue. "That will throw them over to a joint session on Tuesday, and we can handle 'em better that way. The Weldon and Hammond men want a joint session vote too. We'll throw the mob at 'em Tuesday."

"Yes, but there mustn't be any more adjournments. This is a dish which must be served hot, Jimmy. It's Tuesday or never."

"Sure. Now for those speeches. They want to be good and warm."

How the Honorable James Boylan worked for the next few days Sunday included, has passed into the history of his party. In three days and nights he aggregated seven hours sleep, and Kane and the other lieutenants had little more. Through the State they scamped like busy ants, stumping for Wayland. The public's tepid blood must be heated and not allowed to cool until Tuesday had passed. They knew what a well-aimed missile can do, if properly treated. If Mayor Wayland had come out unscathed from that dramatic ride, he would have been a pyrotechnic politician, a traitor to the people and a puppet of the corporations; but some one had half killed him with an irregular section of brick, and lo, he was a hero!

It was not until Monday that the papers got hold of the real intent behind the Wayland boom, but the Heath interests merely laughed and stood closer at the announcement that a huge delegation of voters from all over the state was to be brought up to the Capitol to influence their representatives. What was an aimless mob against an organized body? They would vote first and explain afterwards.

On Tuesday morning two long trains started from the northern and southern extremes of the State. Each was black with men, and in charge of two of Boylan's able lieutenants. At every station of any size they stopped, and new groups crowded in, hailed with cheers. They were out on a holiday trip, to elect a United States Senator. At two stations whole carloads were coupled on. There was a goodly lunch served on board for all, that no distracting emotions might swerve any man from his duty.

When the two trains ran into the capital city, about fifteen minutes apart a dense crowd poured out and formed in lines for parade. They were not disturbed, although many curious onlookers watched them. Mr. Boylan had tactfully interviewed the local police department, and the law watched them with indulgent remoteness.

(Continued on page 7.)

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