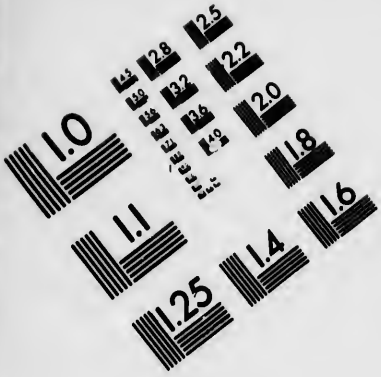

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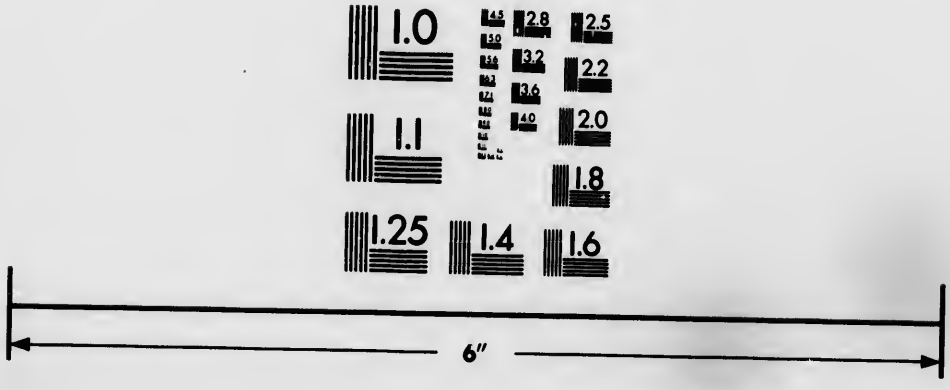

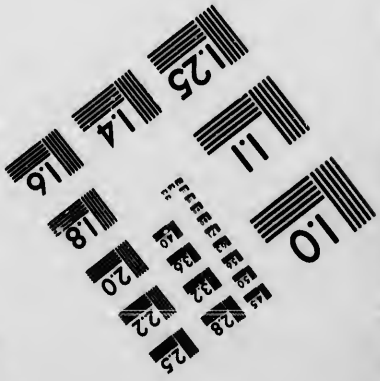

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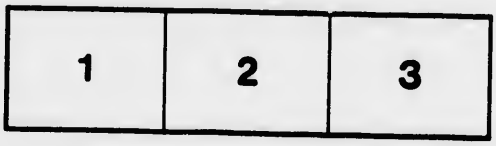

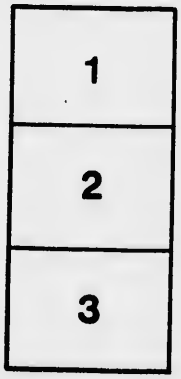

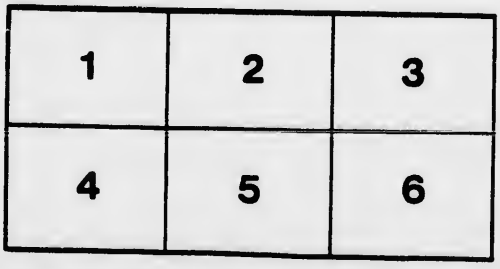

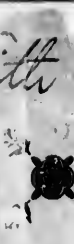

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OUR CANDIDATE

A STORY

OF

LOVE AND POLITICS.

By a Voter of North Flat

Price 40 Cents.

OUR CANDIDATE:

A STORY OF

LOVE AND POLITICS,

BY

A VOTER OF NORTH FLAT.

TORONTO:
THE ONTARIO NEWS COMPANY.
1887.

TO

THE ELECTORS OF THE COUNTY OF KENT

THESE BRIEF CHAPTERS OF INCIDENTS

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RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

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CONTENTS.

OUR CANDIDATE.

CHAPTER I.

OUR CANDIDATE.

When Tom Guilford dropped into the office one day and told me that our folks up in Flat County wanted him to run for Parliament, I was neither astonished nor surprised. Most of both the good and evil that comes to us in this life is superinduced by some action on our part, and I have no wish to represent my hero as a supernatural character, but simply a type of the average good we may find in human nature if we look for it. It is more than probable that Tom had at some convenient season intimated to some of the influential electors of Flat County that he would be willing to sacrifice himself on the altar of his country if the opportunity presented itself. Tom Guilford and I had been firm friends from schoolboy days, had entered the same profession, and were striving with more honesty of purpose than is commonly ascribed to the legal profession to do justly and achieve an honorable career among our fellows. Tom was almost a decade my senior, and in addition to this start that nature had given him, a wealthy old aunt had died and left him a liberal legacy. While these were advantages he would have scorned to use against a friend, Tom had a due appreciation of the important part wealth plays for advancement in any sphere of life in which the possessor may choose to use it, and he thought to use some of his in politics. He had already taken a hand in the political campaigning of the city in the interests of his party and his friends, and now that there came an invitation to try it in his own behalf in a constituency which was part of our native county, Tom took me into his confidence in the matter; nay, more, invited me to go along as Junior Counsel of the Clear Grit Candidate for the North Riding of Flat.

"Come, my Endymion," said Tom; "throw up your briefs, and come out of this dingy office into the country with me. It will be an agreeable change for both of us during the warm weather, and we can have a good time if I don't get elected."

Whether it was my assent, or the representations made to him by the local lights of our party in North Flat that settled it, Thomas Guilford, barrister, solicitor, etc., London, Ont., and the J. C. aforesaid, might have been seen not many days after the legal conference above referred to, taking their journey into a rural constituency of Western Canada, in one of the best livery turn-outs that Catchemtown could produce.

It was earliest autumn, or rather, latest summer. Our way led through one of the richest agricultural districts of Canada, the roads were good, and the weather was fine. Dame Nature seemed doing her best to give both parties a fair field and no favor in the coming contest. The J. C. was in rapturous mood. Office slave that he had been for several years, there opened before him two months of rural life, not dull and monotonous, as rural life often is, but filled with the commotions of a general political campaign, which in any country where popular government obtains, begins in the chief centers of civilization, and extends in widening ripples, till it reaches the most obscure "Cross-Roads" and "Corners" settlement. He, the J. C. aforesaid, would sit at the rough but plenteous tables of the North Flat farmer, breathe the invigorating country air, draw inspiration from nature, and learn wisdom of the political wire-puller. Delightful prospect! No wonder that the birds seemed to be singing a new opera, that the tinted sumacs and the dark green maple foliage turned to richest tapestries, and the roadside gully became a purling brook. How easy it was to picture the battle going all in our favor, the victory even won, and our handsome carriage the car of state in a triumphal procession, while field on field of golden grain, waving in the summer breeze, bent a graceful obeisance to the victor.

With the would-be Candidate, it may be, the problem did not look so easy. There was an expression of anxiety on his face. The regular party convention, which was to formally nominate him and publicly announce him as the party's harmonious and unanimous choice, was yet nearly two days off, and who could tell what perverse human nature might do in two days; what ambitions of local aspirants, temporarily suppressed, what neighborhood and factional jealousies overcome, might be kindled afresh in the course of two days?

Thomas Guilford was a bachelor in fact as well as at law, of a well-proportioned physique, though not of a pugnacious disposition, and though just past thirty, he was more often found drawing nice distinctions in legal procedure before a Judge in Chancery than brow-beating a witness or bamboozling a jury in

the common courts. Added to an attractive figure he had a handsome and intelligent face, and an address that was courteous, even frank, without being familiar. Not just the manner of man that makes a popular politician, to be sure, but with an ideal not too high, and a fund of good sense that enabled him to adapt himself to his surroundings, he had a belief that he could succeed in politics without descending to the familiarity that is often mistaken for ability. He held no ultra-radical opinions, and he rode no hobbies. In politics and religion his strongest tenet was that whatever is, is best, and even to that he had one exception—a Tory government in power at Ottawa. In short, I wish to represent him as a man without any narrow bigotries about persons or conditions, yet possessed of strong common-sense convictions about every measure that occupied the public eye. He had read Adam Smith and Horace Greeley with equal impartiality, and had come to the conclusion that while artificial conditions could be made temporarily promotive of the commercial importance of a particular people, the free and natural intercourse of all trade was the principle that best worked out universal justness. He was therefore a sincere Free Trader without regarding Protection as a mortal sin.

He had a strong rival for the party candidature in the person of the sitting member of the Provincial Assembly, who, young, clever, and popular in the truly political sense, wanted to rise to a place in the Federal Parliament, and was straitened in nothing but cash to make his calling and election sure.

It will not affect the thread of this story if I leave my readers to surmise why it was that this rivalry suddenly disappeared, and instead of an opponent, the Local Member appeared at the preliminary meeting of the party organizers the most pronounced man in the house for the nomination of "Our Candidate."

CHAPTER II.

THE CAMPAIGN OPENS.

From the moment we crossed the concession line that divided the electoral district of the North Riding of Flat County from the rest of the world, the countenance of our candidate began a transformation. He shook off the serious mood he had been entertaining. The hard lines that contact with the world, the flesh and the learned counsel for the defense, had begun to draw

about the mouth were perceptibly relaxed. The look of misanthropy he had been wearing as he reflected on the pie-crust character of ante-election promises, died out from his features, and there was a sudden and great upheaval of his social nature. To every farmer's wife and daughter we lifted our hats like city gallants, and said "good-day!" with a hearty cheerfulness that must have made that common-place salutation strike the ear with a new significance. We drove carefully through flocks of sheep that encumbered the roadside, lest, perchance, our carriage wheels might maim a lamb belonging to one of the "free and independent" of Flat County; and we stifled the hard words that rose to our lips when a miserable cur flew out at our horses, lest the wind might carry our imprecations to the ears of the owner and harden his heart against Our Candidate.

One of the measures which marked the statesmanship of the men in power at the time Our Candidate insisted on serving his country, is known to posterity as the Gerrymandering Bill, though that is not the title by which it is cited in official records. According to the preamble the intent of the act was to distribute representation in Parliament according to population in the country. But the unprejudiced outsider will agree that the first purpose of the honorable leader of the Government in introducing the bill and requiring his supporters to vote it through, was to provide territorial asylums for a class of electors who suffered from a political monomania about a change of Government, and were expected to give the ruling party a great deal of trouble about this time at the polls.

In the opposition press it was spoken of as a scheme for "hiving the Grits." By the passage of this bill the boundaries of North Flat were so manipulated that its political complexion was very materially changed. The township of Mackenzie on the east, having a Grit majority of two hundred, was taken off and added to the next electoral district, already hopelessly Grit in its political sentiments, and the township of Tupper on the west, with a Tory majority of fifty, was added from an electoral district that guaranteed a Tory majority without it. This transposition of two hundred and fifty votes made North Flat a very evenly divided constituency and left the result at the polls correspondingly doubtful.

It was reflection on these things that made us mindful of the estrangement of any friendly dweller by the roadside as we entered the Riding that fine summer morning and determined us to represent the Gerrymander Act as the most atrocious measure in all the annals of political crime.

"What position are you going to take on this Temperance question?" asked the junior counsel, as he observed his companion, the Candidate, lapsing into the melancholy mood again for a moment.

"Why, an out and out supporter of the temperance measures, to be sure," he answered.

"But you don't believe that a law to determine what a man shall eat and drink can be logically defended?"

"No, I do not. But, my boy, you have studied law long enough to know that a thing does not need to be logical to be either advisable or acceptable. These temperance laws are moral laws, and moral laws are made to fit the moral sense of the times in which they are enacted, not the strict rules of logic. The moral sentiment of these times calls for a law against liquor selling because drinking intoxicants endangers more than the drinker, while a stomach over-laden with bread and meat only incurs dyspepsia in the eater."

"But since the injury begins to be public with the drinker and not with the seller we have no right to go behind the drinker with our legal interference," suggested the J. C.

"Perhaps not, if you are going to fall back on your strict logic again," answered the Candidate, "but I tell you this is a matter of majority conception, not necessarily a logical one. We are striving after parliamentary honors just now, not after logical conclusions. It is all very well to be able to see these things in their logical light, but the world is still governed by sentiment more than by sense, and if you don't want to reflect on the intelligence of the majority, Endymion, you will lay those logical niceties away in the back room of your mental attic till this campaign is over."

"But what are you going to do with those friends of yours who are in the licensed-victualling business? They will hardly take kindly to your preference for sentiment over sense in this case."

"No, I expect not; but this is an instance in which they must exercise their sense and not their sentiment. They are in the minority, and as it is my friends in the Provincial Government who control the issue of license, they will be careful how they oppose me."

"But, Tom, you are not going to resort to anything of that sort in this fight?"

"My dear boy, we have not got to resort to anything in this instance. The whole matter is understood, and I have simply to take things as I find them. I shall never so much as insinuate this coercion. It is the majority opinion that I will use my in-

fluence in that way, because others have done it, and I bow to the majority."

"Then this is to be entirely a question of majorities, as I understand it," said the J. C.

"The majority have decreed it so," answered the Candidate, and lapsed into silence again, that was unbroken until we reached the next homestead inhabited by an adherent of our cause, where we called to remind him of the convention and admonish him to bring out his friends and make the meeting a large one. Thus we rallied the known friends of our party as we passed along and rested that night beneath the hospitable roof of one of the "Fathers of Reform" in Flat County.

CHAPTER III.

A NORTH FLAT POLITICIAN.

A conspicuous figure in the municipal affairs and local politics of Flat County was Colonel Toll. He came of good old Irish stock, and his honorable blood still bore a strain of the blue, notwithstanding a lifetime spent in surroundings that did nothing to refine and much to vitiate it. He had come to the country when North Flat was a wilderness, and with no capital but his sturdy manhood and good muscles he had made himself a home, a competence and a respected name in the community. He was pronounced in his allegiance to the conservatism of the Tory party in politics and of the Catholic Church in religion. But while he clung with the immovable faith of childhood to the letter of both these, he was in spirit much broader than his creeds, and he had thus come to be looked up to as a leader by the smaller minds of the neighborhood and was proportionately valued as an ally by the priest and the politician.

He had taken for his second wife a daughter of Ferguson McDermott, a man of the Presbyterian faith, and one of the fathers of the political Israel, whose deep and unstinted hatred of Toryism would far more than offset the Colonel's repugnance to liberal ideas. Not content with discrediting everything Tory himself, he had sought to educate his family in a like distrust of everything that sympathized with Toryism. How then could the daughter of Ferguson McDermott become even the second wife of such a son of the Canaanites as Col. Toll? That was what the neighbors wanted to know when the marriage took place. The curiosity of the common gossips may be prying, but it is not very

intelligent. In this case it suggested a dozen sinister motives for such an alliance, but it never could give Jane McDermott's sensible head and heart credit for commanding Col. Toll's attention on unselfish grounds. They were probably ready to admit that love was a stronger passion than religion or politics in two young people who had never experienced religion nor presided over a town meeting; but the Colonel was on the sunset side of life when his first wife died, and Jane McDermott was far past the years of attractive girlhood when she married him, and the neighbors were slow to credit either of them with sufficient of the tender passion to overcome confirmed religious and political prejudices. However that may have been, years had given to the present Mrs. Toll a strong and matured character that compelled the respect of Colonel Toll and grew in its influence upon him unconsciously as time went by.

The only other member of the household was the Colonel's only child, Honora Toll. If the plain old farm-house, standing in a grove of evergreens, with only a well kept gravel walk, a freshly whitewashed picket fence and a flower border of hollyhocks and marigolds, had been ever so much plainer than it was the knowledge that pretty Nora Toll lived there would have given it the distinction it had among the many less cared for farm-houses of Tupper township. She had evidently come into a full inheritance of the accredited beauty of her parents' native isle, and had received with it an inherent gentility that was not the common birthright of the children of a new and sparsely settled country. For these she challenged the admiration of the rudest swain, while the absence of the artificialities and affectations that society might have imposed upon her had she been brought up in the city made her peculiarly attractive to the city young man whom business or pleasure brought into the neighborhood of "Wellington Gate," as the Colonel had named his home. Even the school teacher, whose pedantic air and city-made clothes he supposed to be irresistible in the rural districts, found someone as good as himself in Nora Toll. The young people of the neighborhood were all conscious of a superiority about her which they probably did not stop to define, b' which gave her a like pre-eminence among them to that her fa.ner enjoyed among the adult population of North Flat. While she had no need, if she had had the disposition, to exhibit any anxiety about those attentions from the other sex which worries the precocious womanhood of these days, she was a prominent figure in all the social doings of Tupper township, and was the innocent object of much more attention than she was aware of. Of one thing she was utterly

oblivious, and that was that John Swanson, wealthy, unwedded and well on to fifty, made his frequent and neighborly visits to her father's house, not because of his love for the Colonel's company, but because of his secret admiration for the Colonel's only daughter. His limited intelligence and parsimonious nature were the contempt of the Colonel. But in the country there is not so much choice of companionship as in town and city, and long acquaintance had made Swanson quite endurable in the Colonel's home.

There had been a like indirectness in the occasional attentions shown Nora by J. Jones Pinkerton, a bachelor lawyer of Catch-emtown, a man of small practice in law, but of large social consequence, hinging upon an illustrious ancestry, which, however, was too far away and had been too long in the churchyard to be of much interest to anybody but himself in a new land where distinction goes more by personal merit than in the old. It was Nora's blissful want of appreciation of the ancestral stock from which J. Jones sprang that nettled Pinkerton and kept him undecided whether or no he ought to tell his love.

This was the position of affairs in those early autumn days on one of which lovely Nora Toll might have been seen resting her pretty cheek against a post of the front veranda at "Wellington Gate," and wearing a wondering seriousness on her face that harmonized beautifully with what poets call the melancholy days of the year. She was wondering what pleasure her father found in these political contests that rewarded him for all the false rumors and rancor they embroiled him in. All the love her young and happy spirt was capable of had thus far been bestowed upon her father, and every evil report about him awakened all her youthful resentment. She little thought that she was to be "an important factor" as the politicians would say, in the campaign that was just then opening.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NOMINATING CONVENTION.

Our friends in Tupper township had so often fought a losing battle while they were part of the hopelessly Tory riding adjoining North Flat, that they had become discouraged. Now that they were joined to a riding more evenly divided there was at least "a fighting chance," as they expressed it, and it was with the intention of enthusing them on that point that our friends determined to hold the nominating convention in Tupperville.

It was a great day for Tupperville. Delegates appointed and delegates-at-large came in from the uttermost corners of the riding, and Tupperville township, as far as it sympathized with our cause, turned out to receive them. The little village hall was crowded in every part. Upon the platform was the Local Member for North Flat, the vice-presidents of township Reform Associations, a prominent member of the Catholic Church, the G.W. M. of the Sleepy Hollow Lodge of Orangemen, and Trustee Enoch Holdup of the African Methodist Episcopal church. These were backed by a row of newspaper publishers, representing the power of the press in Flat County from a Grit standpoint. They were armed with carefully sharpened lead-pencils and a large supply of blank paper, which impressed the meeting with the idea that they were about to take a verbatim report of the smallest happenings.

The honors of presiding were bestowed on a young man of pleasing address, whose natural abilities had made him the spokesman of the younger element of North Flat Gritism on all public occasions, and whose sincerity and zeal always enthused the vigorous-lunged youth of the municipality at a political rally of any sort. On this occasion he felt himself especially honored, and the enthusiasm he awakened stirred the blood in every vein until the oldest voter in the room thumped the floor with his hickory walking-stick and put unusual emphasis behind every ejection of tobacco juice.

The prominent Catholic nominated Our Candidate, and the Worthy Master of Sleepy Hollow Lodge seconded the nomination. No other nominations were offered. The political aspirations of half-a-dozen prominent North Flatters had been mysteriously suppressed, and Our Candidate was to all outward appearances at least the one man fitted by nature and education to carry the Liberal standard to victory in the North Riding of Flat County.

Then came the speech-making, which after a more or less crude fashion gave the key-note to the prevailing sentiment of the speaker's particular neighborhood, and furnished the candidate with an index of all the conflicting interests he would be called upon to conciliate and harmonize during the next few weeks.

He came forward amidst hearty applause from the little hall full of country people. A general election was the quadrennial waking-up time of the sluggish mentality of North Flat. Political issues furnished a mental friction that was wanting in the quiet occupations of farm life, and the more intelligent minds, with the large number of curious ones, enjoyed the loud debate and the whispered calumny of a political campaign more than anything else that broke the monotony of rural pursuits.

With Our Candidate it was an epoch. He had planned for and obtained a nomination to a seat in the highest legislative body of his country in the very neighborhood where he had played as a lad and struggled as a young man, and now he was just on the threshold of achieving his greatest ambition. But he was not elected yet. The attachments of boyhood and the friendships of youth, when they are not extraordinary, are as apt to turn to jealousies as they are to warm into new devotion when the success of an individual is thus brought into sharp contrast with his undistinguished mates. His nomination had not been as spontaneous as a man of his keen sense of sham would like to have had it and it rather humiliated him as he reflected that he must say "by your favor" to the smallest intelligence in the riding in order to succeed; indeed, the smaller that intelligence the more careful he must be not to overlook it. Here on the very threshold of the public career he aspired to he was met with the delicate task of having to say what would fire his most ardent supporters, while at the same time he must be careful not to offend his moderate opponents. From this time forward—well, until the last ballot was marked on voting day—he must sink his own individuality and follow the humiliating dictation of party expediency. He must bury his personal independence in his political ambition. He could resurrect it again—he thought to himself—when the election was over and he stood on the floor of Parliament, uninfluenced by anything but the truth and an honest desire to serve his country.

Our Candidate was not the best type of man for the rough and ready stump oratory that calls forth the popular huzza. His temperament and manner were too refined and his education too finished for the market he had taken it to. But this meeting was made up of his friends chiefly, and though his utterances were too studied and his words too much chosen to bring out uproarious applause, what he said had the flavor of sincerity and the tone of modesty and met with general acceptance.

The Local Member had, by preconcerted plan, been reserved for the last as the big gun, that would leave a reverberating echo for the delegate to carry home with him and enthuse his neighborhood. He was admirably adapted both by nature and experience for the work of the professional politician in a country where the institutions of government are determined by the popular vote of a rudimentary nationality. He was expected to bring the meeting to a climacteric close, and he did so. He astonished his friends who had urged his own nomination by the generous spirit in which he endorsed Our Candidate, and the emphasis with which he moved a resolution making the action of the con-

vention unanimous. Without committing his nominee or his party to any specific policy, he pronounced the men in power a set of rogues and imbeciles, and predicted their inevitable defeat at the coming poll in a glowing peroration: "I hear, even now," he said, "the first rumblings of the prophetic thunder; it is drawing nearer; growing deeper; the storm of an outraged and indignant electorate will strike this country on the 17th of September and drive the present government and its party into the undiscoverable beyond!"

(Deafening applause.)

CHAPTER V.

POLITICAL MISSIONARIES.

The means of winning a man of Tory tendencies from the error of his ways to the pure and undefiled principles of Gritism are many and various. He can be wooed — that is, some specimens of him — like a well-intentioned but weak-minded sinner, by smooth words and fair promises of what is to be enjoyed when he has passed over Jordan; that is, when the loyal Opposition gets over on the Treasury benches. Another can be converted by holding up to his mental vision horrible pictures of impending evil under the present party rule. Another may be only a backslider, still holding firmly to the main doctrines of the party faith, but in an evil hour led away by some plausible invention of the enemy. To him it has to be explained that these seeming advantages, of a high tariff for instance, are but for a season, being based on false premises of political economy; and that when the hard times come again, he, with the Tory and the disappointed office-seeker, will be left on the wrong side of the fence.

Should you, dear reader, feeling called to the work of a political missionary, ever drive up to a farm-house and ask for "the Boss," it will be well to have it determined beforehand if possible to whom that title applies in that particular household. If a woman comes out resting her tired hands upon her hips and wanting to know "what you want of the Boss," and inquires if "you're them political chaps what's runnin' 'round the country, keeping men folks from their work an' tryin' to get 'em to vote your way?" you may depend upon it the person before you has great influence in the matter of how the vote on that property shall be cast, and that "the boss" with a small b, who is out "stumping" the back pasture in the interest of a rising family of

girls, is only the nominal head of the household. If the person before you has been brought up in your political belief the man in the back lot will vote right, and you need not waste any time in discussing the issues of the campaign with him. If she favors the other side, well, then it depends on your policy much more than your party's. If your candidate is a good-looking, or even an agreeable man, it may be worth while to stop to tea, provided you can get an invitation.

The morning after the convention we took into our carriage one of the life-long Reformers of Flat County and set out on a missionary tour. Why our guide and *aide* in missionary labors should so arrange it that on the very first day of our travels our carriage should draw up at Col. Toll's just about dinner time, would have been a puzzle to Our Candidate and the J. C. if he had not given us a little of the inside history of municipal politics in Flat County.

The Colonel was known to be well read in political economy, and a peculiar phase of his much reading was that with a great deal that was narrow and conservative in politics and religion, he had mingled Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill, making him a free trader in material things, while a protectionist in metaphysical concerns and opinions. He was Reeve of his township, and had that very year aspired to the position of presiding officer of the county council.

There was a tradition among the local politicians of Flat County that political issues and party feeling had no place in municipal affairs; but it was only a tradition. The vote on the Wardenship was almost always a party vote. On this occasion the county council was so constituted as to have a Tory majority, but it was inharmoniously made up, and the coming forward of two Tory aspirants divided the party strength and gave the office to a Grit Col. Toll was an old and tried and withal a modest servant of the county. He was getting on in years and had a very reasonable wish to crown his term of service with the honorable office of Warden, and he could not forgive the selfish ingratitude of his friends which had deprived him of the only office he had ever set his heart upon. Our associate in missionary labor judged well, therefore, when he said the Colonel's known objection to Protection, which was the chief issue of the campaign, would furnish him an excuse for standing aloof in this contest or throwing his weight on the other side, thus satisfying his grudge against those who had deserted him at the council board.

CHAPTER VI.

A NEW ISSUE OF THE CAMPAIGN.

"Well, you had better come in and have some dinner, anyway," was the first symptom we had of the Colonel's disposition to tolerate us on the premises at all. We who knew the Colonel little then, were in doubt whether the invitation was simply a concession to Mrs. Toll, now as ever a staunch Reformer, or the spirit of revenge moving within him. It is the common tendency to find a selfish motive for the kindliest deeds if we can. Knowing we had a firm friend in that strong-minded woman, Mrs. Toll, we only exchanged significant glances and went in.

Even a few days of country life, with continuous riding in the open air, had wrought a miracle on the J. C.'s appetite, and he was not a bit abashed at the enormous plateful of fried pork, crisp eggs and large, mealy-looking potatoes that the Colonel piled up for him. But even while the coarser sense of physical appetite was as yet unsatisfied, a finer, more subtle sense, which always responds to the power of beauty in some of its forms, was stirred by the pretty face and pleasing figure of the Colonel's daughter, seated on the other side of the table. To the J. C. she seemed a picture of physical loveliness and rural sincerity, set in a framework of homely surroundings that intensified its charm. The company being large enough to carry on the conversation with very little of his assistance, he found the mountain of ham, eggs and potatoes a friendly fortification behind which to hide his discomposure when caught, either by Mrs. Toll or her stepdaughter, staring too intently on the entrancing picture.

Mrs. Toll, with manifest pride, if not some strategic intent, had seated Our Candidate and Nora opposite each other. Whether the former wished to avoid the rocks and shoals of the political channel on which he might rightly fear a too free discussion with the Colonel would land him, or whether he was really interested in taking the soundings of Miss Toll's mind, the fact was that he left our assistant missionary to woo the Colonel while he tried to discuss irrelevant nothings with Nora.

"Political questions do not interest you greatly, Miss Toll?" said Our Candidate, intending it not so much for an inquiry as for an apology for the attention he had to give to the Colonel's remarks at intervals.

"Yes, they do, Mr. Guilford," said Nora with some animation; "but a woman's views are not often asked for in Flat County. I don't know how it may be in the cities."

"Well, I am sure they would be more often asked in town and country if it were generally understood that ladies gave attention to the subject," said Our Candidate, with complimentary gallantry.

"Or, if our names had a place on the voters' list?" suggested Nora, with just a tinge of sarcasm in her tone.

Our Candidate winced just a little under this gentle probe at the selfish spirit he was conscious of entertaining from the moment he had entered on this campaign.

"Are you anxious that the ladies should have the privilege of voting?" asked Our Candidate.

"Not so anxious about the particular privilege of casting a vote," said Nora, "but we have come to think that the ballot is something which is wanting to give us an actual part in the progress of the race along with our fathers and our brothers, and we hear just enough about voting at such times as these to lead us to suppose that a vote is the only means of having our interest in the world we live in acknowledged."

"I could influence just as many votes as the Colonel in our school section if the women were allowed to electioneer," said Mrs. Toll, trying to catch the Colonel's eye for the effect she knew her remark would have on him.

"Don't give these women folks any encouragement about woman suffrage, Mr. Guilford," said the Colonel, warmly, while he preferred keeping his eyes on the piece of meat he was cutting rather than meeting the glance of Mrs. Toll.

By the time the meal was ended and a glass of hard cider drunk, our horses were in the harness again, and our host, by the gentle persuasion of the local missionary, had given his word that he would not vote against us, though he did not think he could proclaim himself on our side. So we parted in amiable mood.

This retirement of one of the most influential men in the enemy's ranks from active part in the contest might have been thought triumph enough for one day, but it seemed only to whet the local missionary's appetite, and we bowled along the country road again with an increased confidence in our ability to carry North Flat for Our Candidate.

No one would have known that any other thought was responsible for the Candidate's apparent happy frame of mind if he had not surprised the J. C. by abruptly asking:

"Don't you think Miss Toll a deucedly pretty girl?"

"Well, you're just shouting, she is!" said the J. C., more anxious about the force than the elegance of his response.

"And she seems to have an intelligent head on her shoulders," added Our Candidate.

Then, as if suddenly realizing that this was a fit of abstraction not to be permitted while the campaign was pending, he turned to the assistant missionary, and good-humoredly asked where the next implacable Tory lived.

CHAPTER VII.

OUR CANDIDATE IN THE HANDS OF HIS FRIENDS.

The particular attribute of fitness for office in Our Candidate which seemed to go before all others, was his wealth. Wherever his fitness was privately discussed, this was a qualification mentioned or implied when all others were forgotten or insufficient. It drew into his following many of the least admirable characters in every village and settlement. Some were shiftless loungers, who, by hook or crook, succeeded in always appearing in decent clothes and maintaining a kind of recognition in village society. Others had fallen lower, and they were to be found at almost any tavern door where the Candidate chanced to drive up.

"Give's yer han', Mis'er (hic) G'ilford. I know yer goin' to be (hic) 'lected," said one of these slobbering samples of the would-be-thought "free and independent" electors of Flat County, as he ran up against Our Candidate in the hallway of the "Beehive Hotel" in Winkville, where a crowd of our friends had gathered for an organization meeting.

A salutation like this always awakened disgust in the mind of Our Candidate. But he had gone into this contest with a determination to win, and whispering to himself "this is one of the majority," he shook hands with the fellow and answered him briefly but jocosely, then made his way through the crowd to an upper room of the hostelry, where he found his junior counsel glancing over the columns of the Botchtown Bugle and the Buxton Borealis to see what reports had been made of the convention. He threw himself on the bed as soon as he entered and gave utterance to a very weary yawn that startled the J. C. and caused him to look up.

"I say, Endymion," said Our Candidate, "there isn't much fun in politics after all."

"Why? What's the matter?" asked the J. C. sympathizingly.

"O, those fellows down stairs want money."

"And you're trying to elevate the standard of political morality?"

"So they tell me. And I might as well try to elevate the devil."

"Well, he is a hard case, according to the best moral authorities," said the junior counsel, "but you're going to win in this fight."

Without seeming to appreciate the encouraging remark of his counsel, he continued:

"By the way, have you read the Tupperville Triangle's complimentary notice of my nomination? It's just printed, and one of the boys down stairs kindly brought me out a copy to cheer me up, as it were," and Our Candidate drew from his pocket a sorry specimen of "the art preservative," and read:

A little more than a baker's dozen of cranks and idiots, led by the bottle-holder of the Grit Government at Toronto, who presumes to sit as the local representative of this intelligent Riding, met in the Tupperville Town Hall last Wednesday, and nominated Tom Guilford, a pettifogging lawyer from the city of London, of little character or ability, as the Grit candidate for North Flat. We would like to know how many more lawyers we are to have in the parliamentary assemblies of this country.

"Flattering, isn't it?" he added.

"Not more so than this allusion to your esteemed opponent, in the Buxton Borealis:"

A corporal's guard of venerable mossbacks from various parts of the Riding met at Tupperville, on Friday, and nominated that notorious mountebank and trickster, John Smith, to lead the forlorn hope of degenerate Toryism in North Flat, in the coming election. We should like to know what these ranting imbeciles mean by Protection to native industries.

"They haven't got more than two sixpences to the shilling out of our friend Tommy, have they?" commented the Candidate. Then he added, "I must write some letters to our boys and get them at work." He bent busily over his work for a while and the J. C. went on with the parceling of some campaign literature that was intended for distribution throughout the Riding.

"Do you think there is anything *ultra vires* about these?" he inquired, when he had finished writing; and then proceeded to read the following epistles:

WINKVILLE, August 30, 18—

JONATHAN BOGGS, ESQ.,
Chairman 1st Div. Buncombe.

MY DEAR BOGGS—What are our friends doing in your sub-division of Buncombe? I hope they are alive to the interests of our cause. Every

voter in the division must be seen, and the way he votes ascertained. Wherever there are any "doubtfuls," they must be labored with until they are made right. We are going to win if we all work; but we must poll every Reform vote in order to do it. Send me the marked lists of the division as soon as possible, showing how every man stands at this date, and any remarks in reference to those who *should be seen*. Hold association meetings often, and keep the thing hot on our side, and we will come out all right.

Very faithfully yours, THOMAS GUILFORD.

WINKVILLE, August 30, 18—

L. A. M. BURT, ESQ.,
Buttonhole P. O., Flat Co.

MY DEAR BURT—What are you accomplishing down in "Satanville" division? I know it's a hard hole. Be careful not to do anything that will void my election. They are a treacherous lot. Smith worked that locality before he was a candidate himself, and he knows just what we will both have to do with it. The man who buys it last will be the most likely to have it. Stir up the few friends we have, and keep them all hot. There is great advantage in making every man believe that success or failure depends on him alone. I will get over and hold a meeting there as soon as I get our friends in Despondency township rightly interested. Write me to headquarters how things stand.

Very truly yours, GUILFORD.

WINKVILLE, August 30, 18—

E. J. CHORE,
Rover East P. O., Flat Co.

MY DEAR ED—What success are you meeting with down in the "Marsh"? I am anxious about that part of the Riding. Smith mesmerized them awfully when he worked it for Rufeson. I stand well with the Bishop up home. The new priest is liberal in his opinions, and we are going to have the best Church vote our party has ever polled in North Flat. Be careful not to injure it by anything injudicious.

Very truly yours, GUILFORD.

WINKVILLE, August 30, 18—

ENOCH HOLDUP, ESQ.,
Africa P. O., Flat Co.

MY DEAR HOLDUP—How goes the battle down in Egypt? I know there are some parts of the country more productive of corn than conscience, but don't do anything that will upset the election, for I am going to be elected, and we don't want to have to do it all over again. I will get over into Africa township and hold some meetings as soon as I can. In the meantime get every one of our men at work. If they can each make one convert our minority is turned into a nice majority in your division. Sincerely yours, THOMAS GUILFORD.

WINKVILLE, August 30, 18—

DR. HOBSON, M. P. P.,
London, Ont.

MY DEAR HOBSON—There are three men in your Riding that have votes in North Flat. I wish you would find out if they vote right, and

if so, arrange for their coming down polling day. They are Dennis McGuigan, John Smith, and Washington Potts. Of course the law prevents me from paying their fare here, else I should be glad to do so; but see that they come. Between us, the run will be a mighty close one, by reason of the gerrymander, but I think I shall win.

Yours truly, TOM.

"If it is a question of majority with you again," said the J. C., "I don't mind voting with you to let them pass."

"Carried, then, by a majority of two to nothing. Now let me see! What am I going to talk about out at Muggins' Corners, to-night? I gave them Gerrymander, Streams Bill and Boundary Award out at Plugville last night, didn't I? To-night I must make it Boundary Award, Streams Bill, and Gerrymander."

"With a little Onderdonk Contract thrown in somewhere," suggested the J. C.

"That's a fact! I'm not rubbing that into Tupper as much as I should. But I'll wait till I meet some of the speakers on the other side and they begin to throw up 'steel rails' to me. Then I'll walk into them."

At this juncture the hostler of the "Beehive" announced "rig's ready!" and Our Candidate and the junior counsel set out for Mugginsville.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON TO MUGGINS' CORNERS!

"The longest way 'round is the shortest way home," has been said of the road that leads to Cupid's abode. And about the longest road from Winkville to Muggins' Corners led by the home of Col. Toll. Our Candidate said that it led past the farm of a voter he wanted to see. Besides it was now several days since our visit to the Colonel's. The missionaries had left him under deep conviction, and Mrs. Toll must have had several opportunities to put in a word in the meantime.

It is the common custom to retire early in the country, partly for the purpose of saving fuel and partly because there is nothing to sit up for if one's courting days are over. In this lies one of the advantages a farmer's wife has over her sister of the city. There is no condition in which a husband is so apt to see the force of his wife's reasoning as when she gets him in bed. Sooner than get up again, particularly if it is a chilly night in autumn, he will admit a great deal he has had doubts about and would re-

fuse to accept if he were where he could conveniently get out of hearing.

Our Candidate expressed an anxiety to see what use Mrs. Toll had made of her opportunities; so we started for Muggins' Corners early in the afternoon and went by the way of the Colonel's.

The junior counsel could not help sympathizing with Our Candidate in his anxiety to see the Colonel. There was something exceedingly pleasant about Mrs. Toll's house and housekeeping. Unpolished in the sense of intellectual refinement, it was bright with a homely cleanliness and comfort that one did not meet with in the average country tavern. To a man much accustomed to the conventionalities of city supping and dining and latterly harassed by the sham compliments of a political following, it had all the attractiveness of strong contrast. To the man who a short time ago had thrown himself upon the bed in the dingy sleeping-room at the "Beehive," disgusted with ambition and the means men take to gratify it, Mrs. Toll's airy parlor with its vine-shaded windows was indeed a haven.

It was perhaps a selfish desire to enjoy it all himself that suggested the idea of sending the J. C. on to Muggins' Corners, though the alleged reason was the necessity for getting those letters posted in time for the next Corners' mail, while he had a little private conversation with the Colonel.

The welcome that Col. Toll gave us was sufficient evidence that he was none the less our friend than when we had seen him last, and while the hired man was providing the J. C. with a vehicle in which to continue his journey to Mugginsville, we gathered that the Colonel had determined upon more than a tacit approval of our cause.

If there was anything wanting at this juncture to perfect the pleasant mood in which Our Candidate now found himself, he had it when Nora Toll, in a halo of light muslin, set off with a bit of bright ribbon at throat and wrists, came out and laid her plump, pretty arms on the gate to say that her mother wished us to come in and have tea before we went farther.

It was no matter of surprise to Our Candidate when he entered the house at "Wellington Gate" to find there Mr. J. Jones Pinkerton. His well known position as legal adviser and general manipulator of political small jobs for the Colonel's party would naturally make him acquainted there, and his reputation being better known than the man himself to Our Candidate, he evinced no surprise at Pinkerton's presence, though he did feel that he would rather they had not made their visits at the same time.

Not so with Pinkerton, for the dissatisfaction he felt was plain-

ly apparent in his face. The art of concealing the emotions and presenting only the unruffled front of a gentleman, which is supposed to especially inhere in high-born persons, must have been lost in the migration of J. Jones' ancestors, for it found no place in him now. He was decidedly disgruntled, but whether by something the Colonel had let drop regarding his kindly leaning toward the Grit cause and Candidate in this election contest, or by reason of Nora's undisguised willingness to carry her step-mother's invitation to Mr. Guilford to come in to tea, Our Candidate was in blissful ignorance.

Gathered at the tea-table, Our Candidate found himself the *vis-a-vis* of Nora again, while Mrs. Toll faced J. Jones Pinkerton and her countenance betrayed rather the expression of one who keeps another at bay than invites to hospitality. Evidently Mrs. Toll was regarding herself as "a factor" in North Flat politics this campaign, though the question of woman suffrage about which a lingering echo sometimes reached that part of the country had not taken any strong hold upon her mind. A little real power, such as she knew she exercised over the Colonel, was more satisfying to her woman's soul than a great deal of speculative discussion about the influence of the ballot, and her quiet satisfaction just now was divided between Our Candidate's apparent interest in Nora and Pinkerton's evident chagrin. She plied him freely with the most inviting dishes on the table and with conversation that bore on housekeeping and agriculture; but these were not the subjects that were interesting Pinkerton and she made him a little weary when she interrupted an exchange of comments with Nora with some common-place about the unfavorable weather for keeping the butter nice, or a discursive remark on the influence the Women's Christian Temperance Union was exerting on the morals of drinking men.

"I do not see," said Nora, addressing herself to both Our Candidate and J. Jones Pinkerton, "why all nominations for Parliament should be party nominations, why any man with an intelligent idea of his own should not be at liberty to offer himself as a candidate though he had not even a nominator and a seconder for a following, to say nothing of the sum of money that I understand has to be deposited on nomination day."

"That would never do, Miss Toll," said Pinkerton. "We should have the country in a continual turmoil if every hare-brained hatcher of a new theory got equal countenance with those who have supported and established the tried and true faiths and doctrines of the people. If you overthrow the conservative principle you overthrow society."

"I suppose so," said Nora; "at least you gentlemen can always frighten a woman out of her argument when you cannot convince her head or heart."

"Mr. Pinkerton is right," said Our Candidate, "we cannot allow radicalism too much rope, or unlike the proverbial calf he will not hang himself simply but will frighten and disturb a great many people besides; or as you say, it is a question of nerves, and the nervous people being in the majority they require the authors of radical ideas to keep in the beaten paths until their new ideas have attained a respectable antiquity. We shall allow woman the ballot, not when she has grown intelligent enough to have any opinions of her own but when we are sure she will vote the straight party ticket."

Supper over, Pinkerton asked the Colonel if he would accompany him to the Staghorn organization meeting, and was astonished to learn that he intended to accompany Our Candidate to the Mugginsville meeting. After this Pinkerton was not long in taking his leave. Strange as it might appear to almost everybody else in the heat of an election campaign, Pinkerton was more chagrined at the coolness with which Nora let him depart than he was at the Colonel's political apostasy.

He had not gone far when he met John Swanson, also going up to the Staghorn meeting, and to him he told the news of the Colonel's desertion of the party, and gave it as his opinion that the Colonel was influenced in his action by a desire to catch a wealthy husband for his daughter.

The Colonel's political change of heart would be startling news wherever it went in Flat County, but in no one to whom he could have expressed his untruthful and unwarrantable suspicion as to the cause of the Colonel's action would it have awakened a meaner spirit than it did in old John Swanson's breast. A miserly old soul, whose God was his money, the only spark of a more manly passion that he had ever ventured to entertain was the admiration Nora Toll's beautiful face and figure had stirred within him, and even that he had repressed lest it should cost him some of his hoarded wealth. And now there was a prospect of Nora's getting a rich and at the same time a young and handsome husband. Only the mere suspicion of it which had reached him as yet, moved all the hatred and jealousy of a nature that had had nothing but its meaner side cultivated for nearly fifty years. Unconsciously J. Jones Pinkerton had found a strong companion in mortification over Col. Toll's defection, and together they journeyed to the meeting at the Staghorn settlement.

CHAPTER IX.

POLITICS AT "THE CORNERS."

"Muggins' Corners," as outsiders persisted in calling it, or "Mugginsville," as the residents liked to have it called, took its name from an early resident of the cross-roads, Gamaliel Muggins, proprietor of the Muggins House and of Muggins' Hall. The cross-roads village was comprised of one general store, one blacksmith shop, one tailor shop, two taverns, and an unpretentious little house of worship that stood back in the meadow as if it feared contagion from the dram-shops. There were also a dozen farm-houses, scattered within the radius of a mile, all of which were included in "The Corners."

The country tavern is still regarded as an indispensable adjunct of civilization. There is a fear that without a licensed dispensary of intoxicating drinks all other channels of trade and commerce would become stagnant, the wheels of industry would stand still, and this earth of ours lapse into its primeval ruggedness. Wherever civilization goes the country tavern goes a little ahead of it. It is the *avant courier* of the coming village, town and city; or if the village never comes, the tavern is there anyway. In size it is generally the most pretentious building in the settlement, and it takes on respectability of outward appearance just in proportion as the dwellings around about throw it off.

But there were two taverns at Mugginsville, and a division of the trade kept both houses below the standard of country hostelries. Both had leaky-looking roofs, tumble-down chimneys and glass out of windows. They were situated on opposite sides of the road; their landlords held opposite views on matters in general, and, during a campaign, on politics in particular. On one point only they were agreed, and that was the universal hypocrisy of all religionists and temperance advocates.

While one house took for its title the plebeian name of the proprietor, that across the way typified its conservative affinities and its loyalty to monarchical institutions by inscribing on its sign-board "The Queen's." Those conservative affinities were somewhat intensified at this time by the introduction of liquor legislation into the issues of the campaign

It is but natural that that which assumes the name of Liberal or Reform should draw into its ranks all that is radical and extravagant in matters of government and should oftimes be credited

with much more than its judicious leaders believe to be practicable or likely to contribute to party success. Conservatism is that which enjoys the privilege of walking in Liberalism's beaten path and enjoying the fruits of its labors while making few of its mistakes and suffering none of its reproach. The man with a new idea is always a reformer, and generally a Liberal. The man entrusted with the application of accepted ideas is generally a Conservative and most frequently a sharer in the emoluments of office.

The Provincial Government of the country of which North Flat formed a part had the power of regulating its internal trade and commerce, and therefore of granting liquor license. The Federal Government was charged with the making of laws pertaining to the moral welfare of the whole people. The regulation of the liquor traffic partook of both these functions and complicated the jurisdiction of the two legislative bodies. With the Conservative party in power in federal affairs and the Reform party in power in provincial matters, there was in the case of the liquor-seller an interesting antagonism of party attachments and personal interests. He must support the Provincial Government if he would get his license renewed, while he inwardly sympathized with the party in power in federal affairs, a party which, while wisely admitting the evils of intemperance, with conservative sagacity fell back upon the impracticability of legislation not supported by public sentiment as expressed in a majority vote at the polls. This was sufficient to give it the secret vote and influence of the liquor-seller, while it forfeited none of its respectability and little of its moral tone.

When the J. C., leaving Our Candidate behind at the Colonel's, drove into Muggins' Corners that afternoon there were no outward evidences that the political wave had reached it yet. The bright September sun cast its slanting rays under the crooked and kinked veranda of the Muggins House, casting shadows that gave to the eye the impression that the whole structure was suffering from curvature of the spine; they lighted on the only animated objects just then in sight about the Corners, two time-and-whisky-worn figures occupying the doorway bench of the Muggins hotel and condoling with each other on the mistakes of genius and the compassionless force of circumstances which had driven two persons of talent into obscurity.

At the sound of buggy wheels they lifted their dejected heads, their features struggled into the expression of an abortive smile and their noses flashed back the aforesaid rays of the September sun almost as defiantly as would the bright scales of a stinking

herring washed upon the sea beach. The prospect of a drink was their only inspiration, and they both hastened forward to take charge of the traveler's horse, while Muggins also appeared at the door and gave authoritative orders about the care of the beast. Before entering the house the junior counsel crossed the road to the Corners store to learn if pens and ink were kept amongst its miscellaneous stock.

The country store is a many-sided institution, and one of its functions seems to be to furnish a rendezvous for the intellectual forces of the neighborhood; a sort of Mars Hill and Roman forum for the Pauls and Mark Antonys of the back townships. There the general blacksmith of the settlement may be found with diurnal regularity, occupying a particular soap box and holding forth on the failures of the government and the uncertainties of science or theology. There is something constitutional in the village tailor's preference for a place on the counter, where he sits cross-legged, from a habit of his trade or else of cross-purposes with the blacksmith on every question in debate. It is literally and metaphorically the stand-point from which he views the mistakes of the party in power and the wiser policy of the opposition. Though it may inconvenience the real patrons of the shop now and then, the shop-keeper never thinks of disputing possession of the counter with him, for it is only these neighborly disputations in his place of business that break the monotony of his quiet existence, and he enjoys them quite as much as the disputants.

The quiet of the "Corners" out of doors was partly explained by the gathering the J. C. found in the store. The meeting called for that night by Our Candidate had aroused the neighborhood, and political discussion had received a new impulse.

"The country allus goes to the dogs when there's a Grit gover'ment in," said the "Corners" blacksmith. "Things wor brisk enough here along about '70, but just as soon as the Grit party come into power the panic 'it us. You can't tell me there ain't nought in the kind o' gover'ment we hev."

"Of course," said an over-grown, awkward-looking young fellow, seated on the molasses barrel; "didn't Muggins put up his new driving-shed and didn't the Methodist folks finish the little church just as soon as the Tories got in again?"

This satirical allusion to the beneficent effects of Conservative rule raised a general guffaw from the friends of the other party, and the advantage was followed up by the "Corners" tailor.

"Well, all I 'naw is when Bright and Cobden got the corn law repealed—I was in the old country and I 'naw y' see—everybody

said it was going to ruin the Hinglish farmer, but it didn't. It was just t' best thing 'at could a' happen'd the poor people of Hingland, an' its been easier for 'em ever since. It wasn't a Protective tariff 'at did that."

"That's so," put in the over-grown young man on the molasses barrel, again. "I was reading the other day that the pauper population of England had fallen from thirty-three to eighteen per cent. in the first ten years after free trade was introduced."

"You shut up, Jim Bigson," roared the blacksmith, reaching for an ax-handle from a bunch that stood on sale near by. "We don't want no boys puttin' in their mouth in this discussion."

Young Bigson dodged the blow aimed at him by the blacksmith by getting off the molasses barrel in double-quick time and, seeking another seat, was temporarily quieted. The blacksmith was a terror to the boys of the "Corners," and Jim was too much interested in the debate to want to get driven from the store.

But the blacksmith was not altogether happy with the argument as it stood and showed his discomfiture by stigmatizing all Grit campaign literature as lies, a point which the company either did not consider well taken or was too apathetic to approve or deny.

CHAPTER X.

AN UNBIASED ELECTOR OF NORTH FLAT.

In the meantime the proprietor of the Muggins House with the assistance of his "help" had stabled the Colonel's horse, and with them had speculated much as to whom the new-comer might be.

"If he's one of them political chaps," said that one of the two liquor absorbers whose nose shone most resplendent in the light of the setting sun, "he's a good Tory, or he wouldn't be driving the Colonel's nag."

"That seems more nor loikely," said Muggins, "but it's sthrange that the Colonel didn't d'rict him to 'The Quane's' over there! His soid don't put more thrade nor they kin help into my house," and then, stopping short in his comments as the J. C. came across the road, he followed him into the bar-room with the double purpose of learning the wants of his guest and the business that had brought him into the quiet precincts of Mugginsville.

"I should like a room where I can do some writing," said the J. C. to his host.

"Writin' is it? O yes, bist room in the house. Commercial traveler, I sup'ose?" said Muggins, as he made some active gestures that served in lieu of going until he had satisfied his curiosity about the business of his guest.

"Colonel Toll's horse y' have with you?" continued Muggins. "Colonel's a big man in politics around here."

"So I believe. And a very fine man, too," said the J. C. "He deserves to be on the winning side every time."

"Well, he is pretty much, only they did bate him on the Wardenship last year. The Colonel felt pretty bad about that. But when it comes to a giner'l 'lection the Colonel's party ginerally wins. The country's goin' sthrong for Purtickshun, an' I'm glad o' it. Don't know as the Guvermint is allus to blame for hard times, but a change don't do no harrum; an' since the Grits took up with them timperance fanatics I ain't so much took with 'em as I was. Of coorse we fellows what's sellin' whisky ez got to keep right with the chaps what's in power here, but 'tween you and me and the Colonel's horse I'd like to see 'em lick't clean out ov their boots this 'lection."

The J. C. intimated his anxiety to get to his letter-writing, and Muggins shuffled away to see if the room was ready.

While he was gone the J. C.'s eye took in the settings of the Muggins House bar. The æstheticism which at this time was pervading the social atmosphere in an unusual degree in the more cultured society of the cities did not stop there. The inter-communication between town and country was so easy and frequent even in North Flat, that the ripple of every current social fancy reached the rural population with more or less force. Muggins, whose contempt for what he called religious cant and hypocrisy was very pronounced, was perhaps quite unconscious of how far he had become a victim of a more modern affectation just then sweeping over the country. The girls had taken to wearing sunflowers in their belts, and Muggins had half a dozen gorgeous sunflowers stuck in bottles behind the bar. The craze for needle-work scripture texts, framed in rustic wood, had at this time about exhausted itself, and it was rather the receding tide of popular fancy that had left one of these stranded on the Muggins bar. It bore the spiritual quotation

"I Need Thee Every Hour."

The daughters of the house had evidently got tired of reading the pious platitude and cast it aside, and Muggins finding it, had

added it to the æsthetic furnishings of his bar. It now expressed the spiritual longings of the brace of worthies we have seen at the bar-room door. A pair of chalk angels had got into the doubtful company of a cut-glass decanter with a silver chain about its neck supporting a metal label inscribed "Rye Whiskey." The bottle, as well as the angels, was probably intended for effect, as the J. C. observed later on that the bottle customers generally drank from was a plain black one drawn from under the counter. A glass globe covering a collection of bright-plumaged birds stood on the head of a mud-bespattered liquor cask; and perched high over all, on the topmost shelf, amongst a goodly array of empty cigar-boxes, was a badly preserved screech-owl, the appropriate symbol of late hours and bad articulation.

"I hope when the Colonel's party gets in they'll give us some Purtickshun agin the cranks what's thryin' to ruin our business," said Muggins, returning at this juncture to escort his guest to his room.

"Haven't you hotel men a pretty good share of protection now in the large license fee? And it is alleged that hardly anybody but a good Grit like yourself can obtain a license from the present local government."

"Yes, that's all right, that is," said Muggins, stopping on the stairs and turning half-around in order that his guest might be impressed with the insincerity of his Grit affiliations by a peculiar facial contortion; "but this Prohibishun Act is carryin' the Purtickshun ide' too far, don't you see? It 'd shut us all out o' doin' a legitimate bis'ness, so it would."

"I see," said the J. C. as he rolled up the curtain of the dingy little room to its greatest altitude, kicked some pieces of brick used to hold the door open from under the bed, and poured a quantity of water from a handleless pitcher into a cracked washbowl.

It was hardly up to the comforts Our Candidate was enjoying at the Colonel's, and that reflection and the necessity for getting some letters written, put his guest out of the mood for encouraging the garrulous Mr. Muggins. Seeing at last this uncommunicative mood of the stranger, he, with strong assurances of his desire to please, soon left his guest to himself.

The last rays of the long summer evening had ceased to penetrate with any clearness the dirty little window panes of the Muggins House when the rattle of carriage wheels ceased at the door below and the J. C. rose and stretching his cramped limbs peered out. It was Our Candidate's carriage, and the friends

who had been busy arranging the hall over Muggins' driving shed for the meeting about to take place, flocked around the vehicle.

The first visit of the party's new standard-bearer to Muggins' Corners was in itself an event, but surprise was added to curiosity when Col. Toll was found to have accompanied the Reform Candidate up to the Corners meeting. The crowd about the Muggins House grew in numbers until everybody within a large area of that portion of North Flat seemed to be present. But it was not so. A few of the bitterest partisans of the other party kept their places within or around the door of "The Queen's," refusing to let their curiosity get the better of their prejudices, while they sought to frown down the eagerness of the villagers, irrespective of party, to see and hear Our Candidate.

The J. C. reached the carriage in time to note host Muggins' bewildered condition on being unexpectedly called upon to receive and entertain two such distinguished guests as the party candidate and Colonel Toll. His welcoming remarks were intended to convey the assurance that Muggins and Mugginsville were unanimous for the Reform Candidate. But it was evident that Muggins, in the trite phraseology of the boys, was "rattled." There were two things that rather disconcerted Muggins. They were the presence of Colonel Toll in the company of the Reform Candidate, and the relation which seemed to exist between the supposed commercial traveler to whom he had thoughtlessly unbosomed himself and the Candidate. The combination was altogether too deep for a brain the natural dullness of which had been increased by years of liberal indulgence in stimulants.

When it reached the ears of the little group of individuals of pronounced conservative opinions over at "The Queen's," that Col. Toll had arrived in the same carriage with the Reform Candidate, the excitement was intense. Those who had been the self-appointed delegates to carry the irritating news across the road, felt called upon to remain and argue the supposed reasons of the Colonel's conversion, and the result was a rough-and-tumble fight, which, after the campaign was over, it was whispered, would warrant the Grit Government in suspending the license of the Tory tavern.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MEETING AT MUGGINSVILLE.

The Mugginsville hall, in which all the gatherings of a secular nature at the Corners took place, was the second story of a driving shed attached to the Muggins hotel; the same that Jim Bigson had in mind when he instanced the industrial activity of the country under a Tory regime. The seating of the hall had been done with heavy planks laid upon a few stools and backless chairs, re-inforced with some packing-boxes borrowed from the Corners store. Two entire chairs and a very weak-legged table, with one leaf missing, adorned the improvised platform. A lamp, whose light shone through the smoky eclipse of a cracked chimney, shed its contracted rays in the immediate vicinity of the table, while around the wood-ceiled walls a line of tallow candles, held in position by nails driven upward through blocks of wood that served as candle brackets, shed their mellow radiance over other parts of the hall.

It must have been some months since the last entertainment was given at the Corners. Probably a dance at Christmas time, for the evergreens that had once relieved the monotony of board walls were now turned to a decided brown, and the inscription—

"We won't go home till ——

has fallen away at its farther extremity. But an inventive mind that had come early to the meeting, had turned the decayed remnant to account by scrawling with a charred stick from the disconsolate-looking stove, the additional words:

—— we have put a big nail in Smith's coffin!"

Although there was great delay in getting the meeting together, it was not a large one in voting strength when assembled. A count of noses by one of the old residents showed that there were just sixteen actual voters present. The rest were young men of the neighborhood, whose adolescent zeal was not according to knowledge, and who were bent on getting the most possible fun out of the campaign, rather than acquainting themselves with questions of political economy.

Jim Bigson, overgrown and fresh in everything else, had some deep thoughts on political affairs for a youth, which made him an exception among the boys. It might have been noticed on this

occasion that instead of being one of the gang who awoke the echoes in the back end of the hall, he had taken a seat near the front and close under the wall, where he watched and waited impatiently for the Corners meeting to begin.

As Our Candidate passed through the assembly to a place on the platform he heard some one say: "D'y' moind the silk hat ov him?" and the response was: "Yes; he's too toney for us Nor' Flatters."

The preponderating nationality of Mugginsville and vicinity may be inferred from its name, and in order that there might be no injustice to Ireland on the free soil of America, an Irish chairman must be chosen for the meeting. There was an unanimous call for Col. Toll.

But the Colonel had lived too many years to let his zeal in a new cause get the better of his judgment, and not even the gentle persuasions of Our Candidate could induce him to make himself unduly conspicuous at this stage of his new departure. Having said sufficient, however, to show his respect for the Colonel, as well as to satisfy himself that there was no hypocritical hesitation in the old gentleman's declination, Our Candidate had much pleasure in suggesting the name of Patrick McKicker for the position.

Patrick, who was with the Reformers in this campaign as much for the satisfaction of being opposed to the reigning Government as from any fixed political preferences, was loud and pronounced in his views in proportion as his vanity was gratified, and he accepted the nomination with the customary assurances that there were many others present who could fill the chair more acceptably than he could.

"They all knew he wasn't no speaker. They all knew what they were there for. It was to 'lict their candidate an' upsit the cor'upt an' incaipable Gover'mint at Otaway. If the b'ys in the back part of the meetin' didn't kape sthill, he'd make 'em. With these few remarks he had much pleasure in introducing Mr. Guilford, the next mimber of Parlemint for North Flat."

This assumption of honors not yet won, was heartily applauded by Patrick's neighbors, and Our Candidate rose to address the meeting. The boys who had been temporarily restrained by Mr. McKicker, recognizing that this was a moment for obtaining relief for their pent-up feelings, exerted both hands and feet in a good-natured effort to approve the chairman's remarks, so far as they referred to the Candidate.

Our Candidate said he was pleased to address a meeting of such large and intelligent proportions, and it would no doubt

have been more so if the notice of meeting had not been so brief.

Whether a longer notice would have perceptibly increased the intelligence of the meeting, appeared to the junior counsel questionable, though it might have done something for its numbers. There may have been something in the atmosphere that caused Our Candidate, such a stickler for exactness in speech, to make this bull, and overlook the inaccuracy; or it may have been overlooked in the deep concern then on his mind, as to how he should adjust himself on the tariff question if some idiot in the back part of the hall was inspired to call out, "How about the N. P.?" But, if there had been any such evil genius present, the chairman's threat had exorcised him, and the speaker talked on for more than an hour uninterrupted by anything but an approving hear! hear! from the front seats, and an occasional burst of applause from the boys in the back part of the meeting.

When he had finished, the Chairman rose and remarked that "anybody what didn't like our views had better git out, as we proposed to do some organizin'."

This remark Our Candidate felt called upon to revise and tone down, lest some favorably-impressed listener should take umbrage at the Chairman's blunt way of putting it.

It was very late when the "organizin'" was complete, and the meeting at Mugginsville broke up.

One of the well-to-do farmers of the township, knowing the character of the accommodations given at the Muggins House, invited Our Candidate and the J. C. home with him, and the heartiness with which we accepted his invitation was only tamely expressed by our thanks. Of course it was understood that we had engaged rooms for the night, and breakfast in the morning with host Muggins, and the bill was made out and paid accordingly next day. This generosity was rewarded by the assurance that the Tory party always spent more for drinks than the Grits, and that the proprietor of "The Queen's" had taken $17.25 over the bar last night, while Muggins had taken but $13.75. By paying a liberal compensation for Muggins' Hall, however, this breach was healed.

CHAPTER XII.

LOVE AND POLITICS.

"The course of true love never did run smooth." It is such a blind, impulsive current that it takes the most unexpected channels, defying all the unwritten laws of social legislation, and being simply a law unto itself. Choosing ever some untraced and untraversed bed, its susceptible volume is continually meeting with obstructions so utterly opposed to its own quality that shallows, eddies, falls and rapids are many and oft recurring.

Our Candidate had always excused himself for being indifferent on the subject of matrimony by fancying that he was too much occupied with his profession to give any time to the silly business of making love. One of the most improbable things, to his mind a month ago, would have been that in the heat of a political campaign, and he a Candidate, he would be found talking soft nonsense to a farmer's pretty daughter. But Love has all seasons for his own, and prankish Cupid had chosen this extraordinary one to enslave our disciple of Blackstone. Wrapt up in a chrysalis of dusty journals and legal documents, engaged in the professional arraignment of some questionable claim at law, he had seen wonderfully little of the butterflies of city society for a man of his social standing, and he might have continued indifferent to the impoverishment of his social nature until it practically ceased to have a social side, had it not been for this entire change of scene and occupation. This transference into unconventional surroundings and companionship with people who are not supposed to be ever intent on match-making had caught him off his guard. He had been taken at blissful unawares, and he did not yet know the strength of the influences Nora exerted over him.

The fact that the Colonel accompanied Our Candidate to the Mugginsville meeting was the best possible evidence that what the latter professedly drove around by the Colonel's to learn had proved satisfactory. That the call had been otherwise pleasing to him was only a surmise until he informed the junior counsel that he had accepted the Colonel's invitation for both of them to spend the following Sunday at "Wellington Gate." Then it was apparent that the Colonel's home was to Our Candidate as an oasis in the political desert of North Flat; a place where he could rest comparatively undisturbed by the hordes of political Arabs, who, under the guise of helps and assistants,

bored him with their advice and importunities; a spot where he might be refreshed by change, and so recover from the fatigues of six days and as many nights of unbroken march over the dead level of political small-talk and smaller stratagems, toward what looked more and more like a delusive mirage, as he approached it.

Face to face with his opponents on the platform, or deep in a scheme to counteract one laid by the enemy, there was an infatuation about politics that absorbed him. Playing the obsequious part of hypocritical regard for an unknown and simple-minded backwoodsman, or devising a questionable agreement for the support of an ignorant or unprincipled voter, he was burdened with disgust. Canvassing all day, on the platform and in the organization meetings nearly all night, the few moments he ever got for rest and reflection were full of weariness and worry. What wonder if Sunday and Nora Toll's sweet womanly face had an indescribable charm for him? What wonder, if in the moments of pause during that warmly contested battle, his thoughts were most prone to turn in the direction of "Wellington Gate," and a few hours' rest for mind and body in the presence of a pretty and intelligent girl in an unconventional country home?

So it was that the visit of the political missionaries to the home of Col. Toll proved the starting point of an issue Our Candidate had always regarded as totally foreign to the domain of practical politics, or any worldly ambition. And Nora, resting her pretty head against the veranda rail in maiden meditation that autumn afternoon, could she have known that she was to be as intimately concerned as her father in this campaign, would probably have taken off her apron and tried to drive the love sprites out of her hair, as she was wont to fight the mosquitoes and the June flies that came up from the lake shore in myriads on hot summer evenings. A girl always resents the first familiarities of Cupid. She knows that antagonism is the surest way of increasing his determination.

A drive with Nora on Sunday afternoons took Our Candidate out of the Colonel's presence and out of the hearing of the oft-recurring subject of politics; and Nora soon discovered that he was growing indifferent to that subject when in her company. That was probably the reason why she persisted in introducing it. Yet she would have refused to acknowledge even to herself how much she was interested in Our Candidate's success in the impending election.

He was as yet unaware of the jealousy he had aroused in the minds of J. Jones Pinkerton and John Swanson, but Nora was aware that

a drive along the thickly settled town-line would be advertisement enough for all North Flat to know, ere another week passed, who her father's Sunday guest was. Indeed it would be difficult to tell which traveled the faster, the news of the Colonel's political flop, or the attentions of the Liberal candidate to his daughter. Equally difficult would it have been to say how public opinion stood on the perplexing question whether the Colonel's apostasy was attributable to Our Candidate's attentions to Nora, or Our Candidate's attentions to Nora the outcome of the Colonel's conversion to a new political faith. But it was a question farther reaching in its interests for the people of North Flat than any of the political issues of the campaign, for it was an issue that interested the women.

CHAPTER XIII.

GETTING THE STRENGTH OF THE PARTY.

"If they don't use money we've got 'em!" exclaimed Bob Saunders, chairman of the Central Reform Association, in council assembled at Catchemtown.

The checked lists had been sent in from all the polling divisions, showing how each elector might reasonably be expected to vote, and there had been a big call for a general meeting of the Association for a final summing up.

Before the meeting got down to business, little groups formed here and there to discuss what they had heard from opposition sources, and tell what they had each done to confirm the wavering or win over new friends.

Our Candidate had got in for this meeting, and was much sought after by his friends, in order to inform him of a hundred rumors, good and bad, from as many sources, and to modestly explain the part the rumor-bearers had acted in devotion to his cause.

Ezekiel Moore was one of our friends who always had some good news, though it as invariably had a tinge of disappointment in it.

"Did y'hear about Squire Morton, over to 'the Forks'?" asked Zeke, his face beaming with the surprise he had in store for Our Candidate.

"No. What about him?"

"Well, he's come over to our side."

"How do you know?" asked Our Candidate, who had an unpleasant way of pinning his informant down to particulars and a habit of doubting mere rumors, however favorable they might be to his cause.

"Well, Hank Kennedy heard him say that he didn't think the Government had done a good thing in gerrymandering the country."

"What else?" said Our Candidate, impatiently.

"Oh, nuthin'," said Zeke.

"Humph!" said Our Candidate.

"I guess John Thompson's going to vote with us this time," said Zeke.

"What makes you think so?" asked Our Candidate.

"Well, I had a long talk with him last night, and he kind o'—"

"Kind o' what?" asked Our Candidate.

"Well, he talked kind o' favorable."

"I guess we'll get Ike Smith, too," said Zeke, after a pause, Our Candidate's attention having been temporarily drawn elsewhere.

"What does he say?" asked Our Candidate.

"Well, I saw him yesterday and put the points to him pretty strong."

"Well?" said Our Candidate, inquiringly.

"Well, he said he'd think it over," said Zeke.

"Just so," said Our Candidate.

"I'm to see Swingover Smith to-morrow," said Zeke, encouragingly, for Our Candidate's face betokened some impatience at the inconclusive ending of Ezekiel's report, "and I think I can get him."

"Yes, you might," said Our Candidate, laconically; and as he turned to hear some one else's experience, Ezekiel addressed himself to the J. C.

"I believe I'd have got Sellout Jackson if the other fellows hadn't bought him up. I know they're using money. If I only had a little money to work with," he continued, suggestively.

"Our Candidate is fighting this battle strictly on the party's merits," said the J. C., with great emphasis, "and we are going to win, too."

"I don't know about that, without money," said Zeke, and he turned away with a downcast, despondent air.

Bob Saunders called the meeting to order just at this juncture by remarking in a loud key that if they didn't stop their confounded babel and get down to business he was going home.

The withdrawal of Bob Saunders would have been looked upon

as a calamity next in its effect to the resignation of the Candidate himself, and this announcement caused profound silence for the space of about a minute.

"We'll take up the voter's list for the town," said Bob, "in committee of the whole, and every man mark his list when a name is called out as he thinks the man will vote; then we'll compare estimates and see how we stand."

"Absalom Ayers?" called the Chairman.

"He votes 'Guilford,'" said a voice in the back part of the room.

"John Brown?" called the Chairman.

"Gone to Winnipeg to buy town lots."

"James Bacon?" called the Chairman.

"Worst Tory in town," said a squeaky voice in the corner.

"Put him down 'Smith,'" said the Chairman.

"John Connors?"

"Exodusted with another man's wife."

"Might o' put it off till after the election," suggested the Chairman.

"James Davidson?"

"Reform! but his wife's Tory," came from a crushed voice near the window.

"Put him down 'doubtful,'" said the Chair.

"William Lucky?"

"Tory; but he has no vote."

"That's lucky for us!" said a voice in back part of the house.

"Mark him 'to be sworn,'" said the Chairman.

"Patrick Murphy?"

"Got no vote, but he's with us," announced the meeting.

"Chairman of this division will see that his vote's got in. Make a note of it right now," ordered the Chairman.

In this way each division list was gone over, many names eliciting some such comment as the above, but each holder of a voters' list marking it according to his own notion of how each man's vote would be cast.

"I make this division twenty majority for our side," said Zeke Moore, who, during the passage of good-natured comments, had returned to his naturally hopeful frame of mind.

The meeting laughed incredulously.

"I make it nine against us," said Jim Brooks.

Against this, too, the meeting demurred as a bad estimate.

"I make it exactly up-and-up," said Mike Cuseton. And to that the meeting generally assented, as neither so hopeful as to dull our energies nor so depressing as to discourage us. But the

heads of the meeting had their own opinion about the count, and gave the enemy a majority of nine.

The summing up of the totals from other parts of the riding gave Our Candidate a majority of one hundred in round numbers, and it was this conclusion that called forth the remark of Bob Saunders with which this chapter opens: "If they don't use money we've got 'em!"

CHAPTER XIV.

AWAKENING TENDER MEMORIES.

Long after the meeting had closed, Our Candidate and his junior counsel sat in the bed room of their hotel laboring with a quantity of correspondence.

"Now I want to write a letter that calls for special diplomacy, Endymion," said Our Candidate, when the work had progressed some time. "There's a highly respected resident of our city who has shown a deep interest in getting me elected into the Kingdom of Grace; I wonder if he would give a fellow a hand to get into the House of Commons. He was a North Flat boy with me at school, and he is a deacon in the Methodist church in the city now. There are five or six of those damned 'saved' fellows over in Martyrville who have religious scruples about casting a vote; he comes down and exhorts them occasionally. If he would come down and do a little political exhorting they would probably come out and vote for me. I must write him," and the aspirant for political honors wrote as follows:

MR. SHADRACH QUAKERSON, London.

MY DEAR QUAKERSON—You have at all times shown a deep interest in my welfare, which, I am sorry to say, I have not always appreciated as I should, but I have always felt a good deal more on that subject than you—

"No, confound it! that will not do," he ejaculated, when he had reached this point. "I'm not going to put myself on record as a hypocrite. Let's see," and he began again:

MY DEAR QUAKERSON—As you are probably aware, I have been chosen to contest North Flat in the Reform interest. I know you do not take much interest in politics, but I believe every thoughtful man will agree that in doing what he can to place the affairs of the country in the hands of a pure and right-minded statesman like the Reform leader, he is doing the cause of Christianity a service and will have the

approval of a good conscience. If you could come down and say a word in a casual way to your brethren of Martyrville, I am sure they would see their way clear to coming out and voting. If you do I shall remember it with life long gratitude. Sincerely yours,

THOMAS GUILFORD.

"That will have to do," he commented, as he affixed his signature. "Now, we must have some music for our meeting up in Satanville. Success does not depend on an appeal to intelligence up there. We must work on the boys' emotions. I'll write to Dodger for some of his political revival hymns, and get Shucks to come down and lead the singing," and he wrote:

J. D. DODGER, ESQ., Barrister,
Toronto.

MY DEAR DODGER—Send me a couple hundred of your campaign songs, and engage Professor Shucks to come down and lead the singing for us at the Satanville meeting next Friday night. He will find the place when he gets here. Easy to find, they say. *Facilis est descensus Averni.* I am going to win. Yours truly, TOM.

"There's my old school chum, Jeremiah Solemn, has a vote down here. I wonder if he would come and give a fellow a boost if I were to write to him. How running for Parliament does awaken old friendships!" And he wrote:

JEREMIAH SOLEMN, ESQ., Barrister,
Contentionville.

MY DEAR JERRY—I don't know whether age has brought wisdom, but as I remember you at school you were one of the worst Tories in our Form. I have been chosen as the Grit standard bearer in North Flat, and I see from the voters' list that you have a vote in this riding. I shall want all the votes I can get. Don't you think that for old acquaintance sake you could throw your political principles to the winds, and help to send the country to the dogs by coming down and voting for me? If you can't do that, I admonish you, by all the love you bear an old schoolmate, that you stay at home and let the country go to the devil of its own accord. Yours as ever, THOS. GUILFORD.

"There's another old friend, or rather an old friend of my father's, that I must write to before I quit," said Our Candidate, and he wrote:

TO MAJOR FOUNDLING,
Ivy Cottage, Raleighville.

MY DEAR MAJOR FOUNDLING—I have just learned from a mutual friend that you were an intimate friend of my father's, and that you have always held him in kindly remembrance. My father died in my early youth and many of his friends are unknown to me, but I cannot be regardless of those who respect his memory, and I shall do myself the honor of calling upon you as soon as I can get into your part of the

riding. You are doubtless aware that I am the Candidate in the Reform interest for North Flat, and although I am told you hold different views from mine, you may not deem it an impossible thing to do something for the son of an old friend. Very respectfully yours,

THOMAS GUILFORD.

"I must write," said Our Candidate, "to Hannibal Slope, the President of the Tupper Township Association, and ask him whether Timothy McQueer or Solomon Touchy is Chairman of No. 10 polling sub-division. I want to find out how they are getting along in No. 10, and if I address the wrong man as Chairman there'll be —"

The exhausted laborer for political distinction stretched his weary limbs from his chair, and was asleep.

The J. C. watched him for a moment as he slept, and soliloquized: "This is what the politicians mean when they say 'The office should seek the man, and not the man the office.'"

Then he shook Our Candidate gently by the shoulder, and admonished him to come to bed.

CHAPTER XV.

A MIDNIGHT MISSION.

Somebody has said that many people might lengthen their days by spending less time in bed. It would be at least equally sage and axiomatic to remark that if people kept their eyes open they would see more. If the people of Rover township had not been in the habit of retiring so early even in times of a political campaign, some of them might have seen at midnight on the night following the incidents recorded in the preceding chapter an enclosed carriage and a pair of horses standing on the roadside at a point on one of their well traveled roads where a large wooden cross painted a ghostly white extended its symbolic arms into the thick darkness that just then surrounded it. The night was rainy and the rain was accompanied by some gentle peals of thunder and a few flashes of lightning which now and then lit up the roadway with its fitful glare. In proximity with the cross and carriage but still considerably farther up the road, somewhat surrounded by the few houses that formed the settlement, stood the parish church of St. Yusef's and the vicinal residence of the parish priest.

Although it has ever been the province of the religious teacher to increase men's faith in the supernatural and the tendency of

the politician to lessen it, strangely enough the one has ever been found using the other to promote each other's supremacy. The object of both has been to rule, and the centralization of power is always aided by adding the terrors of the unknown to the predominant forces of the known. The governing power of the church centers in the presumed supernatural power behind it, and every step in the separation of church and state has been a step of skepticism in religion. Conservatism in politics goes hand in hand with conservatism in religion, and radicalism in politics is the continual forerunner of liberalism in creeds. Where there are exceptions to this they are accidents and incongruities and have been dictated by policy, not followed from conviction.

Father Innocent, the parish priest of St. Yusef's, must have chosen his ecclesiastical name with reference to some other object than expressing his own character. Perhaps some beloved Pater or Preceptor of his youth had given a charm to the name that overshadowed its inappropriateness when taken by himself; or perhaps some elder brother in his priestly order, of greater experience than he, had suggested it as a happy disguise for the fresh postulant who he saw would not always take things for what they seemed. He was yet young, of fine physique and strong expressive face, one in whose presence not only those who regarded him as their spiritual guide but every ordinary mind was constrained to mentally acknowledge inferiority. There was an intellectual penetration that made itself apparent in his features; and a consciousness of strength in face and figure was accompanied with a frankness of manner that won at once a timid and ingenuous nature of his own faith, and would go a long way toward disarming the educated prejudices of a heretic. The candid mind felt safe in his confidence, while the cunning one could not fail to be impressed with the difficulty it would find in hoodwinking him.

He had a keen sense of the fitness of things, and would no doubt have preferred to rule men by reason of his superior intelligence rather than by the authority of an ecclesiastical system. But his judgment was always stronger than his emotions, and with him the practical always took precedence over the ideal. He would have been a reformer if he could have reformed and ruled at the same time, but the influence he wielded demanded that he preserve a conservative attitude both in politics and religion, while in heart he sympathized with that individuality which casts off unwarranted authority and bears the imputation of infidel and radical while it gives to the world all it has of broadening intelli-

When the transplanted ritualism of Great Britain tried to establish itself as the governing power in the most free and enlightened province of British North America, in a form expressed in the term "the old Family Compact," it marked out a line of political distinction that quite accurately defines the two parties of this country still, though the broadening spirit of the times has been conformed to by slight changes of name. Conservatism has become Liberal-Conservatism, and Radicalism has become Liberal-Reform, which opposite compounds make very apposite terms with which to express a partyism that has no principle but expediency.

Our Candidate had taken the measure of his man too well to propose any intrigue for securing the support of the people over whom Father Innocent exercised the potent authority of his church. As two shrewd and liberal minds, they knew exactly what each other's influence was worth in church and state. Our Candidate had nothing to offer but the influence of an individual of wealth and professional standing and a mind sufficiently free from inherited and educational bias to enable him to do justly between opposing elements.

Father Innocent was too wise to do anything in direct opposition to the political party in natural harmony with the religious system of which he was a part. The prejudices of the masses are not more potent than the liberality of the few in the long run, else progress would be at an end. But for all the purposes of sustaining personal or party influence it is better to stand with the old than move with the new.

So far as Father Innocent could sympathize with the new while his Church continued to harmonize with the old, it would be to his Church's advantage and agreeable to his own temperament to do so. He did not attempt to disguise this from intelligent minds. There was therefore no dark intrigue such as villains hatch in a midnight conversation between him and Our Candidate. Indeed there was in all he did the degree of conscientiousness that goes with doing what is practically the best, not what is ideally the best. He even gently resented the supposed necessity for making this visit at midnight, but gave good-natured assent to Our Candidate's excuse that it was made on the way from a meeting, to save time and not of purpose aforethought. When the interview ended it was simply understood that there would be no great deviation from the normal status of the large Catholic vote of Rover township no matter by what favors the opposite party proposed to influence it.

The late visitors to the parochial residence had just reached

their carriage and were climbing in when a mild flash of lightning revealed an approaching vehicle. Our Candidate, gathering hastily his coat-collar and neckerchief about his ears, stepped back into the shadow of the large cross and falling on his knees on the rain-softened earth, held his muffler about his bowed face with one hand while he reverently crossed and prodded himself with the other. It was well he did so, for the passing vehicle contained none other than the Tory candidate and J. Jones Pinkerton on their way to Father Innocent. They were not in search of absolution themselves, but they sympathized with the tender conscience that had felt constrained to come through rain and mud and darkness to bow at the wayside shrine.

Thus do the gods seem ready to give the hypocrite a show whenever he displays any natural cleverness.

CHAPTER XVI.

"THE TRAVELING SHOW OF HANDS."

"There ought to be a law that'd put a stop to them cussed fools going 'round to meetings."

"Who?"

"Why, them Doc. Golia' Traveling Show o' Han's."

"Were they out to the Staghorn meeting last night?"

"Well, you'd a'sed so if you'd a be'n there. Of course they were there. Ain't they everywhere where Smith's likely to have it on a division of the house? Why, they had the biggest load last night they've had this 'lection. Twenty-two of 'em came tramping in just when our speaker was gittin' in his best p'ints, an' they broke him all up with their racket, dragging their heels an' stumblin' over people. I'd haul 'em up fur bein' a nuisance if I could. But that'd only show 'em how mad I was."

"Of course it would," said the other speaker. "There is no law that will reach them until they do something more than make a noise at a meeting. The law considers a political meeting a place especially designed for making a noise at. The best thing to do would be to get the Conservative boys to organize the same kind of a gang, and they would soon exterminate one another, like the 'Kilkenny cats.'"

"Humph! I don't know what in thunder we'd do with two lots. We'd never be able to hold a meeting at all."

The institution known as "Doctor Goliath's Traveling Show of Hands," which had given rise to the foregoing conversation

between two supporters of the Conservative Candidate, was peculiar to North Flat in that it had enrolled into something like a permanent organization, an element that was more or less conspicuous in every electoral district of the province. It consisted of a gang of young men numbering nearly thirty, gathered from the chief villages of the riding and the thickly settled country near about. They had specially provided themselves with a wagon that would carry the whole party, and they were never at a loss among the farmers' sons for two pair of horses to draw the conveyance. At the slightest intimation to the appointed leader a few hours were sufficient to carry the news to every member of the gang, and early dusk would see them on the road to a meeting at any given point in the riding. There were only three or four of the whole number who had votes, but these were sufficient on which to base their right to a voice in political gatherings. And a very loud voice it was. There is a period between the ages of sixteen and twenty-two when boys are especially gifted with a desire to exercise the natural functions of limbs and lungs, to the utter disregard of their brains. A wagon load of healthy boys of about this age can crack the plaster on a country school-house wall with their demoniacal noises, made in the name of applause.

The knowledge that men in the mass have more anxiety to be on the winning side than on the right side, is probably what led to the practice at political meetings of calling for a division of the house or a "show of hands" by the side that knows itself to be in the ascendant. It is a very successful device for influencing some wavering or non-committal voter, who is waiting to trim with the victorious side. In an average country school-house meeting of one hundred people, a wagon load of twenty easily made the difference between victory and defeat on a "show of hands."

This organized troupe of young North Flatters, though spoken of by those it was organized to torment, as "Doc. Goliath's Traveling Show of Hands," was really under the immediate generalship of Tommy Tutilige. Tommy was the editor, publisher and proprietor of the North Flat Foghorn, though it was whispered about that the old-fashioned hand-press and meagre supply of battered type which constituted his outfit had been provided by Doctor Goliath, and that the Doctor also wrote such editorials as were not revised from the great party organ in the metropolis.

To the same extent that the Doctor owned and edited the Foghorn, he seemed to own and run Tommy and the Traveling Show of Hands. The Doctor was the Local Member before referred to, who in turn, and for his own convenience, was just now

allowing himself to be run by Our Candidate, with the firmest faith in his own ability to run the whole riding whenever the occasion demanded it. He was fairly successful in his profession, and respected by his patrons, but he was above all adapted to the stump and the caucus work of the politician. He was hale fellow with his friends, political or otherwise, popular as a candidate for any office, and a terrestrial god in the eyes of the boys who constituted the "Traveling Show of Hands." Whenever it was convenient he was one of their wagon-load, drank from the same bottle, furnished them lights from his cigar, and joined in the songs with which they made the night hideous on their way to and from a meeting.

CHAPTER XVII.

LOVE AND PARTY ALLEGIANCE.

"And so he would compel you to marry him by a threat to disgrace your father in the eyes of all Flat County? I see," said the Colonel, and he laughed a cynical "ha! ha!" when the import of what his daughter had been telling him of a visit from John Swanson was made plain to him.

"Yes, father; he knows that I had some knowledge of the debt you paid him out of the hard earned money of the farm, because I kept the books and took his receipts, and he says it would disgrace you forever if it were known what that money was borrowed for."

The Colonel was silent for a time, but his face twitched with nervous agitation, and his hands, which were in the habit of opening and closing in rapid convulsive movements when anything disturbed him mentally, seemed now as if they longed to fasten upon something out of reach. Nora waited some moments for him to speak. When he did, it was as if unconscious of her presence, for he spoke rather in soliloquy than as addressing anyone.

"And this is the bond of political friendship? I ought to have known it. I have seen something of it before, but not coming home to me as this does. I ought to have known it would come when I decided to support Guilford this term. This, then, is the reward of years of allegiance to party; whenever a man

proposes to assert his independence they will destroy his influence if they have to destroy the dearest associations of his life along with it. There is nothing sacred in political warfare."

Every word the Colonel uttered grew in cynical bitterness over the preceding one.

"This," he went on, "is the kindly recognition of party friends who told me I had saved North Flat from the seditions of radicalism forty years ago; this is the consolation of adherence to political principles at the expense of moral ones; this is—" but here the Colonel stopped short, as if suddenly coming to himself, and a realization of the presence of Nora.

What he had said was the revelation of a mind that had been for some days gradually awakening to a new view of his relation to the little world around him—the world as represented in the political, religious and social horoscope of Flat County. How small a matter will sometimes turn the whole tide of a man's thinking and feeling, if it be a matter that touches some strong chord of his nature. The strongest element in Col. Toll's character was devotion to his friends. His strongest friendships had naturally been made within the lines of his political and religious affiliations. He had never questioned whether those friendships were founded on these affiliations or were simply strengthened by them. He only knew that while his generous nature did not confine its friendships to the narrow lines of his politics and religion, it was there that he bestowed most of his devotion, and so heartily had it been rendered that he had never stopped to question the sincerity of professed appreciation. It was therefore a keen blow to him when he learned from his defeat in the contest for the wardenship that a political party has no soul; that it has no interests but those of selfishness. It was the first consciousness of this, more than anything else, that had led him to favor Our Candidate, and ever since he had taken the first step in that direction he had been made to feel the truth more keenly. The breaking away had been mentally painful to him, and this added poignancy to and magnified everything that seemed to bear upon the insincerity of partyism. He now saw it as a mere "machine" which a few men manipulate for their personal advancement and profit, while party principles, though much talked about, are in truth only a pleasing distraction to keep the eyes of the people off the tyrannous invention. The generally sincere but not often thoughtful voter held to certain supposed party principles very much as he held to this or that religious creed, by circumstance of birth or early association, while he helped to tread the political mill half unconsciously.

While the Colonel was speaking his daughter had drawn nearer to him, and as her presence interrupted his bitter reverie she placed an arm across his shoulders, while her eyes, on the verge of tears, looked sorrowfully into his.

"Well, well," he said more indifferently, trying to shake off the abstraction, "let him go on. If the honorable party to which he belongs has no interests to serve that will hold his tongue, let him go on."

"But, father, what is the awful thing with which he threatens us? How can he disgrace you? How can he injure your good name? Tell me the secret of that borrowed money, and let me know what evil it is possible for me to avert by receiving John Swanson's attentions. You know my love for you would make many things endurable that I shrink from when there is nothing but my own inclination to guide me. Tell me the story of that indebtedness to John Swanson, and I will pay it over again with the sacrifice of my life's happiness, if that will preserve your good name."

"No, Nora. There is no necessity that you should know it, and none that you should surrender your happiness to preserve mine. My years are too few now, and yours too many, I hope, to make such a sacrifice just."

"Besides," he added, lapsing half into reverie again, "a misdeed covered is not a misdeed remedied; it is only when we have exhausted its punishment that we are out of bondage to crime. I have not exhausted the punishment of my error, and I am ready, if need be, to bear the rest. Go, drive away your care about John Swanson, Nora," he said, addressing his daughter, "to make room for better company. And I," he added, "will do the same with John Swanson himself when next he seeks to enter my house."

"But, father —"

He turned toward Nora, and raised his hand deprecatingly.

"—you are not so indifferent to this man's threat as you would make yourself and me believe. Will you not—"

"My daughter!" and the Colonel paused to give emphasis to the kind but firm enunciation of that sweet word, daughter. "I have said enough to assure you that there are no two courses in my mind about this matter. Do not require me to be harsh with you. I assure you that there is no great evil hanging over us."

As a child Nora had early learned when her pleading reached the limit it would either prevail with her father or begin to provoke him, and she always stopped there. As a woman she knew still better the firmness of his character; so placing her arm again

about his neck, she pressed a kiss upon his forehead and withdrew from the room.

"And so that blunder of my life comes up again in this shape, does it?" he soliloquized, when Nora had gone. "Who could have thought that instead of being disposed of, it would come up to affect my daughter's happiness! O God! who can calculate all the bearings of a little wrong-doing! I thought I had repaired the evil as well as repented of it. It seems not; I was only working out the physical punishment it imposed when I earned the dollars that paid John Swanson's claim. The mental suffering is not yet complete. Well, I will bear it. The time is getting short with me anyway, and it is worth something to assert one's independence for the little time that remains. I should like to have carried with me to the grave as good a record as the intentions, not the actions of my life would warrant. But they will speak well of me when I am dead. Even political enemies do that—which only shows that their dislike is as superficial as their admiration; why should I be disturbed about either? As for this threatened exposure—I can make as much out of it as they can. Mine was a political party crime; and though a political party is so constituted that it cannot have any remorse, it has a great deal of selfishness. It might not save me for my sake, now that I have deserted it. It may do so for its own."

So saying, Colonel Toll took out ink and paper and penned a note to John Swanson. It was brief as the Colonel's temper, and read thus:

WELLINGTON GATE, Sept. 3, 18—.

JOHN SWANSON.

SIR—My daughter has informed me of your recent visit and the cowardly procedure of it. Consider this a withdrawal of the hospitalities of my house. As to your threat, proceed to execute it if you think yourself and the political party to which you belong will suffer less than I shall by the disclosure.

RICHARD TOLL.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE "FREE AND INTELLIGENT."

"So you're one o' the men what's run-nin' for Par-le-ment?" said a lean, lank, tired-looking man seated on a rail fence that fronted an ancient and dilapidated farm-house in a sparsely settled portion of Flat County, taking a corn-cob pipe from his lips with marked deliberation and drawling out his words so

slowly that they broke in two at the syllables. He seemed in want of somebody to articulate both his speech and his bones.

"Yes, and I would like you to give me your vote if you can do so consistently," said Our Candidate.

"Wal, I doan-no 'bout con-sist-tent-ly," said this specimen of the "free and intelligent" of North Flat, pausing to squirt a mouthful of tobacco spittle at the eye of an indolent looking dog that lay at his feet blinking at us as if wondering whether we would carry off his master and so compel him to leave the comfortable shadow of the fence. "I doan-no 'bout con-sist-tent-ly; but I knaw I can't afford to vote for nob-dy for naw-think."

"Have you decided how much you want for your vote?" asked Our Candidate, running his eye from the voter to the assistant missionary and the junior counsel to see if they were enjoying the cool commercial character of the transaction.

"Naw. But I knaw I doan get naw-think but what I pay for an' the man what gets my vote hes to pay for it," and the lean, lank, shackle-jointed man knocked the ashes out of his cob pipe and slid carefully off the fence with a peculiar hitch of his body that seemed necessary to get all the bones of his relaxed frame ready to drop into place when he struck the ground.

"Have you had any offers yet?" asked our missionary.

"Naw-think sure; but a man what called yisterday tole the Miss-us that if I voted for Smith it 'd be all-rate."

"Do you know who it was?"

"Naw. Miss-us said he wouldn't leave his name, but it 'd be all-rate, he said."

"Well, if you let me know what he gives you I can probably do something better for you," said Our Candidate, and climbing into our carriage we left the free and untrammeled elector busy with his thoughts; the only thing he was ever busy with, judging from his surroundings.

"I don't expect there's much use calling here," said the assistant missionary as we drew up at the gateway of a more thrifty looking homestead, the house itself standing more conspicuous than many in North Flat on a piece of rising ground some distance from the road. "But it will show our good will toward them to do so, so let's go in."

A chumpish farmer boy sat on the woodpile near the side door whittling what was probably intended for an ax-handle when finished. An able-bodied girl of the household, attractive chiefly in the freshness of youth and robust health, was drawing a bucket of water from an old-fashioned well with the primitive windlass attachment. It came up from the depths dripping and

splattering its cool, crystal contents about the well curb in a way to arouse the sensation of thirst in every one of us, even if the request for a drink had not been suggested as a good opening for whatever in a political way might follow.

When the girl returned with a cup she brought her mother with her, and the missionary introduced Our Candidate.

The boy on the woodpile was ordered off to bring his father from the field, and while he was gone the "missionaries" tried to be entertaining with general comments on the weather and the harvest. The girl stood open-eared, open-eyed, and open-mouthed, staring at Our Candidate, her interest fixed rather more on his high silk hat than any other feature of his dress or face. In another moment she had flitted into the house, evidently with something on her mind.

While the boy and his father yet lingered the girl came out again followed by a cronish looking old woman whom her incantation must have drawn from some chimney recess. She hobbled forward on her stick and was introduced briefly as "Granny."

"So, you're the *Reform* can-e-date, are y'?" croaked the old woman, emphasizing the word reform in a way that called special attention to it.

"Yes," answered Our Candidate, in a hesitating way, as if he feared he might be talking to some witch of Endor, with mysterious powers to do or undo his election, "the Reformers of Flat County have chosen me as their candidate, and I shall expect to support any reasonable reform measure that —"

"Well, Reformers is rebels!" snarled the old woman, with rising inflection and without waiting for Our Candidate to state the mental reservations he entertained for the conciliation of conservative minds. "Reformers is rebels," she almost hissed between her few and straggling teeth, "and no son-in-law o' mine kin vote for rebels. It's nigh on-to fifty years now since my husband John cum hum from the meeting down at the old log school-house what set on the corner of the Jenkinses place; it was when Lyin MacKenzie was ther' speech-e-fyin', an' John, he cum hum an' says he to me, 'Jane,' says he, 'there's goin' t' be a rebellyun,' an' so there was. An' it was all on account o' them *reformers*."

Our Candidate sought to interpose something by way of explanation, but the old woman went on.

"Wasn't you a readin' in the papers the other day, Willyum—where's Willyum?" she interjected, evidently referring to the boy who had occupied the woodpile. "Willyum was readin' only the other day in the Mail where that man Mowit was agoin' to

raise a harmy an' take possesshun o' the country up north. Yes, Reformers is rebels," reiterated the old woman, and shaking her long bony finger at her son-in-law who had just come up, she added: "If I'd a thought about it afore you was married, Willyum, y' sh ldn't a hed my darter till y' promised not to vote fur Reformers."

The introductions that followed compelled the old woman to pause for a moment, but she was only catching her breath for a new onslaught and it was evident that nothing in the way of missionary work could be accomplished in her presence, so, on pretense of looking at some of her son-in-law's stock we strolled off to the stables, too far away for the old woman to follow.

CHAPTER XIX.

POLITICAL EPISTLES.

"If I am to be able to talk at al to-night," said Our Candidate, "I must have a little rest. Open the remainder of that batch of letters and tell me what they say," and he threw himself down upon the bed to rest his limbs while his brain went on devising judicious answers to a long list of dreary epistles from the easily disheartened adherents of our cause in the back townships, the general tenor of which was that he must come in person and hold meetings among them if he hoped to keep their favor. Now and then there was one in a more cheerful vein such as this:

THOS. GUILFORD, ESQ., Catchemtown.

MY DEAR BOY—And so you are still urging the forlorn hope of Gritism. I thought that with years would come better sense. Why don't you stand in with the party that is in power once in a while? I couldn't endure the cold sh des of opposition year after year as you do. What the devil do you want to be always reforming something for? it's an endless job and no fees in it. Just about the time you fellows get the country worked up to the wisdom of a measure the conservatives step in and embody the same idea in a bill, and our side gets the glory of enacting it. Well, I wish you luck, and shall not come down to vote against you.

Yours as ever,

JEREMIAH SOLEMN.

DEAR MR. GUILFORD—Satanville is getting very impatient for a little public speaking. They say you are giving the east side of the Riding all of your company because the farmers are better off over there. We have arranged a meeting for Friday night and you must be there. Notify the Traveling Show of Hands. The "Macs" are at it shovel and tongs, and the family quarrel will spoil our usual majority here. Six of the Mc-

Dougalls have declared they will vote Smith this time, and the other side is sure to call for a division of the house at the meeting. Bring on the "Show of Hands."

Yours truly,

L. A. M. B.

"How becoming those initials are to Burt, eh? The lamb and the lion are going to lie down together out in Satanville this time and the lamb won't be inside of the lion either. Leave Burt alone for working a bad piece of this political vineyard. Write him I'll be there for Friday night and that I have engaged Prof. Shucks to lead the singing."

DEAR GUILFORD—The Swamp is looking up. This is a very good season for rats. Those we can't catch we will keep in their holes till the season is past. How about the tariff on wool? I have bought enough long-wool sheep out here to stock a ranch—to be delivered after the 17th —a long while after. The price of rats has gone up and I ought to have another hundred delivered at the same place. I saw Father Innocent by chance the other day and had a conversation with him. He was profoundly indifferent. I hope what you are trusting to is reliable.

Yours, CHORE.

MY DEAR GUILFORD—I don't care how soon there is a vacancy in the Local. I am sick of politics. They are a delusion and a snare, and so help me John Rogers if I don't get into the Cabinet this term I'll throw the whole thing up. If there is anybody on our side who thinks he can represent West London better than I can he is welcome to try it next election. As to the votes you wrote about: John Smith don't live in the north ward, strange to say; Washington Potts wants his expenses paid if he goes, and I'll have to see him again and persuade him out of that silly notion. Dennis McGuigan will go for a small consideration and the pleasure of "votin' agin the guvermint." I'll see that they are both on hand polling day. Wishing you great success,

Believe me, yours truly, THOS. HOBSON.

"Hobson's choice, eh?" continued Our Candidate, "A place in the cabinet or no run next time. Well, he's the only man his party can elect from his Riding, and he'd make a mighty good— Minister of Agriculture, for instance. I'll bet he don't know whether Fall wheat is planted or harvested in the Fall. What's the next one?"

"It's another from London. Brother Quakerson's reply to your carefully indited communication of the other day."

"What does he say?" asked Our Candidate with affected indifference in his tone.

MY DEAR BROTHER—I wish you all success in your work in North Flat, for of two evils I think we ought to choose the least.

"Hard on the Liberals, isn't it, eh?" interrupted Our Candidate.

but I would much rather see you amongst the elect of the Lord than elected to Parliament. Consider the words of the Master: What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul!

Yours in the Lord, SHADRACK QUAKERSON.

"We'll let that lay on the table till the campaign's over," said Our Candidate. "Let's see what the next is about."

DEAR MR. GUILFORD—Our Bible Christian friends hold their annual missionary meeting next Monday night in the Martyrville church and they would like to have you act as chairman. They have asked me, as President of the township Reform Association, to extend you the invitation. If you can arrange it so as to be present it will do us more good than a political meeting. You will be able to get in a word that will please the church members and it may bring some of the "saved" out polling day. I know several of them who are aching to vote if they thought the good Lord would approve of it. Come down now if you can and give the cause of the heathen a lift.

Yours in a good cause, TRIBULATION TUCKER.

"Here's one from your friend Deacon Holdup, down in Africa:"

DEAR MISTER GILFURD—Things don't look no way smilin' down here in Afric' Township—

"Come in!" shouted Our Candidate in answer to a knock at the door.

The grating old knob turned harshly, the door swung slowly on its creaking hinges and two rather gaudily dressed girls presented themselves to Our Candidate. They were taking up subscriptions for Grace Church Bazar and of course the candidate would give them something.

"Has the other candidate given you anything?" asked Our Candidate.

"Oh, we don't know. Two Conservative girls are after him."

"I see. You are running it on a political basis? You are two Reform girls, are you?"

"Yes," simpered the girls simultaneously.

"Well, don't you know that it is against the law for a candidate to make gifts to anybody?"

"Oh, that's nuthin'," said the younger and more forward of the two, "you can give us somethin' just as well as not. We expected to get a good subscription out of you to start our list."

"No, I can't do it. It would be contrary to law. But you might get five dollars out of that young man," said Our Candidate, looking suggestively towards the J. C.

The J. C. took the hint and the two forward girls took the money.

The demands of religion being satisfied the girls departed and the interrupted letter was taken up again.

DEAR MISTER GILFURD—Things don't look no way smilin' in Afric', They is done been mismurized so many times that it is a costin' mo' an' mo' to get em that way. If you doan come down yerself Mister Smiff hez got us on the hip shuah. Yours very respeckfully,

ENOCH HOLDUP.

Before another badly written letter had been deciphered the J. C. found that the tired aspirant for political honors in North Flat had gone into the land of dreams. And there we will leave him while we return to Nora.

CHAPTER XX.

A MENTAL STRUGGLE.

The days that followed Nora's visit from John Swanson were days of great uneasiness. She was too much of a novice in politics to realize any of the concern her father suffered over the sundering of friendly ties that his breaking away from old political allies had occasioned, and her own social status was as yet not influenced by it. The country was so much absorbed in politics just now that little in the nature of rural social gatherings could command attention, and Nora in nowise regarded herself as especially affected by the political commotion in North Flat. She was conscious that the attentions shown her by one of the candidates was the subject of some gossip, in which religion, politics and social relationships were indiscriminately mixed up, but beyond a little womanly vanity that she could not altogether subdue, that gossip had no weight in her mind; the real extent of her interest in Our Candidate she denied to her own heart and regarded it as a profound secret from everybody else. A womanly woman rarely admits her love even to herself until she knows it is reciprocated.

But when her father's good name seemed to be at stake, Nora realized all that that meant. Come of a respectable ancestry, the Colonel and his daughter inherited not the mere pride of blood, but the pride of moral integrity which runs not back to Adam for its illustrious connections. She felt keenly the force of the threat John Swanson had made and she knew that her father felt it keenly too. But she had not been able to draw from him the history of the borrowed money, and in proportion as it was a

secret it must be awful in a woman's mind. She watched her father's melancholy mood and thought, fretted and feared herself into an illness that her step-mother could not understand and her father could not dissipate. She dare not broach the subject again to her father. He had said it and there was no demur; she knew he would go to the gallows to preserve her happiness, or to keep to his purpose, and she knew not how much this dreadful threat of Swanson's involved. What if the threatened exposure should come just when Mr. Guilford's interest in her was aroused and when the name of her father was in so many mouths in North Flat because of his course in the election? Were not the ungenerous suspicions and the false reports now current about him enough without this dreadful disgrace? It must be true, too, for her father did not deny it; he had only determined to brave it. How could it be averted? She sat in her chamber hour after hour thinking it over. But no solution of it came. There is only one true solution to a problem in mathematics and there is only one way of righting a moral wrong, and the Colonel had hit it when he said he must exhaust the punishment the wrong had incurred. It is a mistake to teach that even the forgiveness of a God satisfies justice. In her misery Nora had only the old temporary resort of disguising what she could not disprove, and to that she turned. After hours of deliberation she sat down and wrote the following note:

"WELLINGTON GATE," Tuesday Afternoon.

MR. JOHN SWANSON:

SIR—I have reconsidered the answer I gave you on the occasion of your recent visit and am willing to accept your proposal in order to save my father's reputation. I hope I have not been too long considering the sacrifice. HONORA TOLL.

She folded and sealed the brief epistle and addressing it to "Mr. John Swanson, Mugginsville P. O.," she laid it on the corner of her dressing table and then lapsed into the contemplation of what she had done. It was not a missive she cared to put into any neighborly hand to be carried to the "Corners" postoffice, for the penmanship was her own, not her father's, and though they could never have guessed the contents neighbors will talk. She might have gone herself; it was only a short canter on horseback, that she was in the frequent habit of taking. Yet, pressing as the errand seemed, Nora delayed. Whether the letter went or stayed it only boded her misery; and there are moments when we would as soon be the creatures of circumstance as assert our own will. So Nora sat and waited, she knew not just what for, till the attenuated shadows had dissolved themselves in dusk.

Then she felt impelled to get the letter off, and it being too late to go herself she hastened down to the back door and calling the Colonel's man-of-all-work, instructed him to take the letter to the office for her. Then she slipped away to her room again. But her errand down stairs had not escaped Mrs. Toll's keen vision. Indeed, there was little about the place that did escape her vigilant eye, and Nora's recent indisposition she had soon conceived to be more a matter of mental than physical ailment. With a remarkable control of those womanly attributes, sentiment and curiosity, such as would have done her credit could she have taken the hand in North Flat politics that she mildly suggested at the dinner table a desire for, she was much of a domestic diplomat. She had learned that in all matters of mystery there was great virtue in waiting, and she never precipitated her own defeat by acting too soon. But Nora's manner when she came down stairs betrayed her perturbed mind, and the special stress laid on the mailing of a letter at night at a farm house, where correspondence is rarely urgent, were conditions to which Mrs. Toll could not be altogether indifferent. She followed John, the farm hand, and asked for the letter. She read the address and it did not surprise her. She had been prepared to keep her countenance unchanged if the letter read "Thomas Guilford" or any address that was unfamiliar to her. But "John Swanson," an innocent old neighbor who had sometimes bothered Nora somewhat with his awkward officiousness, but nothing more; what could be the occasion of a hurried communication with "John Swanson?" With an impulse born of the necessity for a hasty decision rather than a willful intention to do wrong, Mrs. Toll withheld the letter and told John to go on and bring back the mail.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE MEETING IN "SATANVILLE."

The neighborhood that had received the opprobrious designation of "Satanville" was the shame and scandal of the more staid and respectable portions of Flat County. It had distinguished itself for general wickedness and for family feuds that would have done no discredit to the clans Campbell and McDonald in the Seventeenth century but were very discreditable to the more refined rivalries and jealousies of the Nineteenth. There were less than fifty actual voters in the whole settlement, and left to themselves the majority for one candidate or the other would

have been determined by the temporary strength of the animosity existing between the family heads of the McDougalls and the McGregors, who whenever they differed in family affairs carried their difference into politics. Ultra opponents of everything ritualistic in religion they were bitterly opposed as a whole to everything that bore the name or semblance of Toryism in politics, hence there was no revenge for a family slight or offense so sweet as casting a vote for the Tory candidate. To tranquilize their hate and have them vote according to their non-conformist tendencies was the object of our party, and hence Our Candidate had excused and delayed bringing them together in a public meeting, until at last they had become sensitive as to his neglect and would be put off no longer.

The meeting night had arrived, and so had Our Candidate. It was hoped that the introduction of singing into the programme of the "Satanville" meeting would have a soothing influence, hence the engagement of Prof. Shucks, with the "Traveling Show of Hands" as a chorus.

The meeting was held in the Good Templars' Hall, the walls of which shed a moral radiance from tinsel paper banners inscribed "Faith" "Hope" "Charity," etc. The Professor of song opened proceedings with a well executed solo to the tune of "Rob Roy McGregor, O!" which was highly gratifying to the half-dozen disaffected voters of the clan McGregor.

The Government candidate was represented on this occasion by the eminently respectable Major Foundling, referred to in a preceding chapter. It was agreed between the Major and Our Candidate that the latter, whose meeting it was, should occupy the first forty-five minutes; that the Major should then speak forty-five minutes, and Our Candidate should then have thirty minutes in which to sum up. There was little to inspire either of the speakers in such a gathering. The feeling was rather one of contempt for the intelligence that had called them to that neighborhood chiefly because other points had been favored with meetings and partially because it was customary for an applicant for their suffrages to exhibit himself to the crude criticisms of their dull understandings. To avoid even the slightest ground of offense, Our Candidate had before setting out for the meeting laid aside his high silk hat and donned one of cheapest straw.

Now for three-quarters of an hour he exerted himself to interest his immobile company of listeners, who saw little in his carefully chosen words and finished sentences to applaud or condemn. He had dwelt with considerable vehemence on the monstrous iniquity of subdividing the country according to its political

complexion ; had condemned the refusal to execute the papers which would put their Province in undisputed possession of a large piece of additional territory ; had touched in a gingerly fashion the complicated question of the tariff on imports and had wandered off into some vague generalities intended more to occupy the time than to edify his hearers.

The Major rose to reply. "It was hardly necessary," he said, "to inform the people of"—

Here the Major paused to recall the proper name of the territory in which he stood. A broad grin overspread the features of his audience who though they would have resented the use of the common appellation under such circumstances, were nevertheless amused at the Major's hesitation in getting hold of the authorized title.

"The people of North Flat," said the Major commencing again and paying a neat compliment to the people before him by placing them on a common level with all parts of the constituency, "are again in the order of public affairs under a representative form of government, called upon to exercise the grand and glorious prerogative of freemen ; the privilege of saying by their votes whether the Government which formulated and enacted a great measure which brought prosperity to the land should be sustained in power or whether they shall give way to the incapable men and the hard times which prevailed a few years ago." (Applause.)

The form in which the Major had expressed himself might seem to leave the intent of this applause in doubt ; but it came from the Major's friends and was intended to accord with his views however indefinitely expressed. He had paused to receive their endorsement and was about to launch into more specific praise of his friends, or denunciation of his opponents, when a low-browed, uncouth-looking fellow rose up in the middle of the hall and waving something aloft began to make a speech. He was hardly given time to utter more than a sentence before he and the banner he waved were pounced upon by half-a-dozen of his fellows and he and it prostrated in the dust of the hall floor in a rough skirmish that ensued. In vain for a time the chairman called for order, while Major Foundling stood amazed at the unseemly proceeding The flag that had been raised was the frilled and bright-buttoned night-shirt belonging to Our Candidate, and the tenor of the would-be orator's remarks was that "they didn't want no fellow what wore them fancy fandangoes to sleep in a representin' North Flat in Parli'ment."

Our Candidate was staggered, and for the time did not know whether to be amused or irritated. He had doffed his silk hat

in deference to the Satanvillians because it had given offense at the Mugginsville meeting, and now, while he had been speaking a political enemy had rifled his satchel in the hotel and brought forth his night-robe into the meeting; a pair of sticks had been crossed and the extended arms put through the sleeves of the garment, and there it hung for that brief moment in all the gorgeousness of the fashionable *robe de nuit*.

But our supporters had come to the rescue promptly and the man and his banner had quickly gone down in inglorious action, so the night-shirt-episode did not promise to have a very important bearing on the North Flat vote. Order was restored after a time and Major Foundling took the floor again. He referred in disparaging terms to some of the methods adopted to arouse antagonism to political opponents, and then following the remarks of Our Candidate he proceeded to a laudatory discussion of the leading men and measures that had graced the administrations of his political friends. He had barely had time to get back to the thread of his discourse and the equilibrium of his nerves when some twenty or more young men came trooping into the meeting, making as much confusion as it was possible to do.

It was evident that the "Traveling Show of Hands" had arrived. If there had been any doubt about it the simultaneous arrival of Dr. Goliath, who was immediately invited to a place on the platform by our chairman, would have dispelled it The truth was, the "Show of Hands" had arrived some little time before, but, as was their custom, had waited for an opportune moment to make their entry effective. Now on the first symptom of approval given to the Major's remarks they were ready to march in with such clamor as would disconcert the speaker and send the first ripple of restlessness over the audience. The presence of the Doctor too, with his more forcible than elegant style of oratory, when the Major had just been felicitating himself on a quiet time with the milder-mannered Candidate himself, was a surprise to him, and he was hardly responsible for the unhappy allusion he was irritated into making.

"It was very evident, to everybody present," the Major said, "that Dr. Goliath's perambulating load of rowdies had arrived."

Of course this brought the Local Member to his feet with a protest. He did not think Major Foundling, who claimed to be a gentleman, was warranted in designating the gentlemen who had just arrived "a load of rowdies." (Loud applause.) He had been himself in the company of the gentlemen who had just entered and he knew them; and in order to prove to Major Foundling that they were voters and not rowdies he would invite them

to come forward and fall into line before the platform, in order that the Major and the meeting might know who they were.

While the late arrivals and a few others who have been in the meeting from the beginning and who are well known to be voters are moving up to the front amid the greatest confusion, it will be opportune to explain that Our Candidate had lately received a letter from an extensive grower of wool in another part of the Province setting forth that in late readjustments of the tariff there had been manifest favor shown the manufacturer over the farmer, inasmuch as the increased duty had been placed wholly upon fine wools of which there were none grown in the country, while coarse wools, which were wholly raised and chiefly used, were allowed to enter duty free. This was a point that had been entirely overlooked in the tariff debates, and when Our Candidate had his attention drawn to it he had proceeded to "rub-it-in," as he termed it, on the Government speakers at every opportunity. He knew it was a fresh point of debate with the Major, and would be sure to stagger him, and in the confusion which now ensued word was sent down to the door for one of our side to ask the Major, when speaking was resumed, "What about the duty on wool?"

"There!" said the Local Member, waving his hand across the phalanx he had drawn up directly under the Major's nose, "every one but seven of these are voters! I will leave it to the meeting whether the Major should not retract the remark he has just made about rowdies."

The uproar was tremendous; the Major was in a quandary; but the cause demanded some sacrifice of his feelings, and with a brief and vague apology (for the meeting was not so sensitive as the Doctor had made it think it was) he was allowed to proceed.

He had scarcely uttered a sentence when somebody near the door called out,

"What about the duty on wool?"

The Major with admirable readiness responded that it was a case of "Great cry and little wool;" but he would come to that later on.

As the applause this witticism of the Major's awakened was subsiding, somebody in the rear called out that "He couldn't pull the wool over their eyes," which was regarded as equally good by the meeting, and it went off in another paroxysm of applause.

In the brief space of time that had elapsed since the "wool" question was first mooted at the door, a general debate more absorbing than the Major's remarks, had grown up. Jim Bigson, who had walked many miles to be present at the "Satanville"

meeting, was pointing out to the editor of the Plugville Blow-Pipe that the duty on fine wool did not increase the demand for coarse wools as the Protectionist would claim, because there was already more coarse wool grown than the home market could consume. The editor of the Blow-Pipe was about to elucidate the idea that a protective tariff on cloths would indirectly benefit the farmers by shutting out foreign cloths and increasing the consumption of home wool, when a third party suggested that the farmer would be no better off, because he would have to give for the protected home-made cloth whatever he had gained in the increased demand for wool; and a fourth party had suggested that that would be counteracted by the increased number of manufactories, when Tommy Tutilige, of the North Flat Foghorn, pushed his way through the crowd and declared that that simply meant overproduction, no demand for wool at all, a panic in the money market and a return to hard times. The laugh that had suffused the rest of the meeting by the passage between the Major and the man in the rear of the meeting, the editor of the Blow-Pipe mistook for delight at his supposed discomfiture, and he invited the editor of the Foghorn out into the road to settle it by physical prowess. There was a general break for the door, more than two-thirds of the audience getting up and leaving the Major wiping his spectacles and wondering what he had done to break up the meeting.

The speakers waited on the platform some time, but the meeting never reassembled. The Local Member had been deprived of one of the richest opportunities of his life, and the Professor of vocal gymnastics and the Traveling Show of Hands had been prevented from displaying their musical abilities in meeting; so loading up they drove through the settlement singing:

"Though 'twas in the dead of night,
That they called us to the fight,
We're prepared to meet the Tory tricksters soon;
Even now their leaders quake
At the stirring name of Blake,
But they'll shiver at the polling coming on."

CHAPTER XXII.

"THE POWER OF THE PRESS."

"I see you are announced to be present at the Bible Christian Missionary meeting to-morrow night and at Father Innocent's picnic on Thursday," said Miss Toll, looking up from the paper she held in her hand, to Our Candidate, who was enjoying his few hours of Sunday leisure to the full as he lounged in the big arm chair at the farther end of the old fashioned veranda and drew large draughts of smoke from the Colonel's large and quaint old meerschaum which he reserved especially for his best company. Nora had excused herself from taking a Sunday drive on the score of illness. The truth was she did not care to be seen often in Our Candidate's company since Swanson's proposals had been revealed.

"You must find it difficult to fix your exact theological standing just now," continued Miss Toll.

Our Candidate must have felt that he was for the moment in a situation where it would not be disastrous to be candid, for he paused in the work of making smoke-wreaths through which to study Nora's pretty face and figure, and answered, "Not half so difficult a task as adjusting my political views to suit a majority of the electors of North Flat."

It had become a regular thing now for Our Candidate to spend Sunday at the Colonel's, and it was worthy of note with what punctiliousness he refrained from campaign work on the Sabbath, though he made no protest against the work of his agents, who found that day favorable above all others for getting a word with those electors who were too busy to bother with politics on other days of the week. And so it came about that a glorious autumn afternoon found Our Candidate in the position I have described him, apparently as little interested in the election, now only a little more than a week off, as the least public-spirited yeoman in all North Flat. He had thrown off the nervousness with which he entered the campaign, as he learned more of the character of the people he had to deal with, and the reiterated assurance that he was going to win, made for effect from the platform, had been repeated so often that he had come to a sort of comfortable belief in it himself.

As he sat there, did ever mild narcotic join with happier circumstance to make the world delightsome? Here was money, pro-

fessional success, and the respect that these ensure, all combined with that pacific influence that comes to physical and mental sense at the first awakenings of the sentimental passion, ere yet that sentiment has had to adjust itself to the practical necessities of married life. With Our Candidate at this moment wealth, honors, love, were the entwining links that fact and fancy welded in his smoke-wreath chain of pleasing exhalations. Love, honors, wealth, made woof and warp for the intangible gossamer in which he had been curtaining Nora; and with these three at his command he could make the pattern anything he would. Surely, this was the consummation of mortal happiness.

At least, so it looked to the junior counsel, who loitered up the gravel walk just then, and plucked a flower with which to exorcise an envious mood.

"Yes," continued Our Candidate, "I am following Paul's advice and being 'all things to all men, if by any means I may *gain* some,'" referring to his engagement to attend both church gatherings.

"A very strained, if not irreverent application of Paul's words," said Nora.

"Almost as strained as The Mail Bag's report of Friday night's meeting," said the J. C., addressing himself to Miss Toll, when he saw that both she and the Candidate were lapsing into meditation again. "Listen:

"ANOTHER VICTORY FOR GOOD GOVERNMENT.

"The work goes bravely on in North Flat. At the meeting in the Scotch settlement last night, Major Foundling spoke in behalf of the government candidate and carried the meeting by storm. A lot of rowdies led by a local pill-dispenser who has tried to represent that intelligent neighborhood in Parliament, made an effort to break up the meeting but did not succeed until the Major had thoroughly exposed the shallow sophistries of Free Trade. Such tactics make more certain than ever the success of the Protectionist candidate in the North Riding of Flat County."

"The Earth tells quite a different story," said Nora, turning to a page of brief reports of meetings in all parts of the Province:

"A DISGRACEFUL TORY DEVICE.

"A meeting was called by Mr. Guilford, the coming member for North Flat, on Friday night in that part of the riding which rejoices in the typical designation of 'Satanville.' Seeing that the gathering was overwhelmingly opposed to the present corrupt administration, a gang of Tory hirelings assembled near the door and started a fight, which broke up the meeting and prevented the able and eloquent representa-

tive of Liberal principles. Dr. Goliath, from exposing the brazen assurance of Major Foundling and the absurdity of his Protectionist arguments."

"I wonder what fool sent that report to The Earth?" said Our Candidate. "It will only hurt our cause to say anything disparaging about the settlement or the Major, who is every inch a gentleman. If there were no Earth there would be more harmony in the Liberal party and in the country."

Having delivered himself of this liberal opinion, Our Candidate lapsed into contemplation of the smoke-wreaths he had become wonderfully clever at curling.

"This once great organ of the Reform party has lost caste, I'm afraid," said the junior counsel, with a pretended sadness in his tone, as he picked up the paper from where Nora had let it fall.

"Why so?" she asked, with sufficient interest in her tone to encourage further conversation. "What particular change has come over it? Father, I know, never admired it."

"Ah! that is easily understood. Your father could hardly be expected to admire a journal that rose into prominence by the bitterest denunciation of the very convictions he must hold most dear. Presbyterianism and Liberal politics owe much of their ascendency in this Province to the man who founded this paper, and its readers had so associated the paper and its great editor that to them the former has little value without the latter."

Miss Toll was listening. The J. C. was pleased to find himself entertaining her, and he ventured further:

"There is a striking illustration in this paper," he continued, "of the way time brings round its revenges. Its founder and its present editor would make a poor illustration of Damon and Pythias. All political parties are liable to have their ruptures, but it is an inherent quality of the more liberal of the two parties dividing this country. There is the practical wing and the theoretical wing, and they each want to sail by different courses to one alleged end. The founder of this paper and the practical and experienced element that he had drawn around him and solidified into a comparative conservatism, took one course, and the present leader of the party with the brash and brilliantly theoretical wing took another. It was during one of the widest flights of the latter that the present editor of this paper went to the provincial metropolis and started a handsome daily newspaper, under the smile and favor of the present Liberal leader. But its presence was entirely ignored by the veteran editor, the real leader of the older wing; so much so that the name of the new paper never appeared in the old paper's columns. That is

a way the great lever of all liberalism known as 'the press' has of expressing its liberality toward a young and struggling publication. There is no evidence that such a course materially affects the life or death of a new journal, but if it lives it sooner or later has to be acknowledged by its 'esteemed cotemporaries.' This one did not live. Like many another grand idea, it was born too soon, being born before the founder of The Earth died or his influence had much diminished. But a time came when an appeal somewhat stronger than party prejudices was made to the country. It was an appeal to men's pockets, an appeal which when made to man in the mass, is stronger than appeals to his politics, his piety or his principles. It was a proposal to promote commercial greatness by impeding the natural channels of trade. It was a scheme to make a liberal-minded people great by appealing to their selfishness; and it succeeded so well that the more radical wing of the Liberal party was charmed into assent to it. They thought they saw success for themselves in falling into line with the large selfish element which the new policy had developed, and with that combination they proceeded to depose The Earth's leader of the party. But they could not depose The Earth's editor. Only death could do that; and it came, as you know, in a melancholy form. Then the brilliantly theoretical wing was in the ascendant, and great things were promised. The now dominant faction bought up the plant and subscription list of this old sledge-hammer of Reform, and thought they could wield it. The new leader brought on his favorite editor again, and he whom the founder of a great newspaper had scorned, stood in the founder's shoes."

"Your recital runs like a bit of fiction," said Miss Toll.

"But it is a part of the facts of history," said the J. C., "and this poor old journal has been made to swallow itself again and again since then; until, if a newspaper were a sentient thing, this would blush for shame at its own wantonness."

"There are two kinds of newspapers," broke in Our Candidate, who had evidently been listening to his junior's story, "which a thoughtful man can respect. They may or may not be party papers; that is not what determines their worth in a community. In one the editor is so broad and liberal that he can compass the popular mind on any given question and reflect it in his columns without reference to his personal feelings, and his paper comes to be accepted as a reliable index of popular opinion rather than a maker of it. In the other, the editor has an individuality which he stamps upon his paper, and it is under-

stood and accepted as that man's views, receiving such approval as popular opinion accords to them. But the great multitude of what we are pleased to call newspapers are simply printed sheets, made like merchandise, with an eye to pleasing the largest number of tastes. The term 'The Press' meant something when newspapers were few and writers felt a personal responsibility for what they wrote. Those were the days when papers were edited in the editorial room; now they are more generally edited in the counting room. The idea that newspapers always reflect public opinion took a marvelous hold on the human mind when printed sheets first appeared, and the severest shocks to human credulity have not altogether destroyed that hold. The idea may have sufficient truth to always maintain a measure of our faith in it. But in speaking of 'the power of the press' in these days, we should be careful to distinguish between that wonderful piece of mechanism devised for the multiplication of printed sheets and the weight that attaches to a statement because it happens to be set down in print."

"You gentlemen may have seen the mercenary side of journalism in a way that a woman could not possibly do," said Miss Toll, "but, though the thought had hardly taken shape in my mind, I was consciously impressed with a single instance of it in this campaign."

"Tell us of that instance, Nora," said Our Candidate, laying aside his pipe and bringing his chair a little nearer her's. "You are becoming wonderfully interested in politics this election."

This was the first time the J. C. had heard Our Candidate address our fair Sunday entertainer by her first name, and the magnetic attraction that seemed to exist between the two chairs, suggested that Our Candidate was becoming interested in something besides politics. However, the ancient admonition "Know Thyself" is never so much ignored as in af[illegible] of love, and it is reasonable to believe that the remark just made by Our Candidate set Nora thinking not of any connection there might be between her interest in politics and her interest in Our Candidate, but of that mysterious revelation with which John Swanson had threatened her father if she refused to marry him, and which she felt had its mystery in the political stratagems of North Flat. O, why did her father continue to embroil himself in these partisan scrambles for public office when they aroused such bitterness? She might as well have asked herself why she was hourly being drawn into a political complication that bordered upon tragedy. All she might know was this, that the career of the strongest willed men and women is largely an involuntary one.

"Well, the instance of a mercenary newspaper that I have in mind," said Nora, "is the Catchemtown Comet. I came across an editorial in that—'luminary,' I believe you call it—lately in which the publisher belittled his own father's public services in contrasting them with the present candidate's ability and influence, and for no possible reason than the very apparent one of standing well with the man whom he expects will have influence at the Capital next term. I have heard father boast that he has taken that paper ever since it started, and I don't think he will stop it now, though he has left its party for the other; but I shall never value it again. There is something so hideously groveling, so base and unfilial in that act that I feel a repugnance to handling the paper even while I read its few items of local news. The very paper on which it is printed feels as if it might carry the contagion of its mercenary spirit."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Our Candidate. "Why, that is only newspaper policy during a political campaign," he said. "It doesn't mean anything among professional politicians, while it is expected to influence the 'intelligent elector.' You must not consider anything of that sort as meant seriously by the parties themselves. They no doubt regard it all as a good joke. I am sure they would if they saw the serious face you have just been wearing on account of it. O dear," continued Our Candidate, putting on a rueful face and tone, "what a lot you women will have to learn when you are given that right to vote you are agitating for, and go into politics," and Our Candidate threw himself back in the big arm chair and laughed immoderately at Nora's lugubrious countenance.

"And so words do not mean the same thing when printed in newspapers that they do when spoken?" said Nora, brightening.

"Not in a political campaign, anyway, Nora. But I don't know that you can draw the line at what is spoken and written exactly, there may be insincerity in both."

"Then all they say about father in these political campaigns may be only said in fun, and the people who hear will understand that they are only election jokes."

"Maybe," said Our Candidate with some hesitation, as if conscious that he had not yet rightly conveyed to Nora's mind the distinction between sham and sincerity in political discussions. "But," he continued, "I did not suppose there were a dozen persons in North Flat who heard of the Comet's trail in that matter."

"We are better astronomers than you think," said Miss Toll, making an effort to speak cheerfully by taking up the metaphor Our

Candidate had begun. She was evidently pleased with the enforced compliment to the intelligence of the country people. But with a somewhat clouded face she added, "I am sorry to find from this talk about the press, that the Comet is a fair type of all the luminaries in the journalistic heavens. I shall cease to study them now."

"No! no!" said Our Candidate. "I did not mean to be so sweeping as that. The press is a human institution, and as such is susceptible to human weaknesses. But I would not have you therefore think it altogether bad. Newspapers, as they are now cheaply produced, are often published to serve petty ends and utter personal spleen. True journalism can never be an article of merchandise; a newspaper often is."

"I see," said Nora, as a merry expression beamed in her eyes, "What we have been accustomed to call 'a free and unshackled press,' means more correctly speaking, 'a free and unshekeled press.'"

CHAPTER XXIII.

NOMINATION DAY IN NORTH FLAT.

J. Jones Pinkerton, the generally reticent and taciturn wire-puller and official manipulator of the Tory party in North Flat, was unusually quiet in this campaign. His friends, as well as those who were opposed to him politically, observed that he was uncommunicative, even morose, and were at a loss to account for it. But as he did all that fell to him as a legal adviser and special pleader of the party with customary executive shrewdness and even vehemence, they had no ground of complaint. If he did not see fit to take them into his confidence as fully as he had formerly seemed to do that was his own business, and beyond remarking the change that had come over him nobody interested themselves about it.

One of those moves for which J. Jones Pinkerton was peculiar and in which his chief value to his party consisted was brought to light when arrangements began to be made for Nomination Day speeches. The election law provided simply for the official nomination of a fit and proper person to represent the Riding, any provision for the discussion of public issues being left to the politicians and party organizers. Although under the strict letter of the law the official nomination of candidates was made a very perfunctory proceeding the event was frequently taken advantage

of to bring together as large a body of the electors as possible to be harangued upon the issues of the campaign. On this occasion North Flat was to be especially moved upon by the Conservative party, for the campaign was drawing to a close and as yet there had been no grand rally of their forces calculated to enthuse them. Flaming posters were issued announcing a grand mass meeting of the electors of North Flat at the Catchemtown Hall, to begin immediately after the nominations were closed, the meeting to be addressed "by an eminent speaker from a distance," as the announcement indefinitely read.

Upon inquiry by our friends it was found that the meeting was intended to be a thoroughly one-sided one. Investigation disclosed that J. Jones Pinkerton had engaged the Town Hall for that day from the hour it should be vacated by the officer appointed to receive the nominations. He had been careful to enter into a written contract and he held the hall for his own use against all comers.

Our managers had been asleep and the enemy had stolen a march upon them. They were much chagrined, but they at once set to work to offset as far as possible the advantage that had been gained. To all entreaties and threats made to obtain a hearing for our side at their meeting our opponents were dumb. They could be neither threatened nor shamed into giving our side what we were pleased to call "a fair show." Their candidate was utterly without ability as a public speaker, and thus far through the campaign he had found it convenient to be engaged in a different part of the riding from Our Candidate, leaving it to his friends to speak in his behalf. Our Candidate's managers had suggested as one of the strongest arguments for a joint meeting that this would bring the two men face to face and give the people an opportunity to contrast their merits. This on the other hand was the very strongest possible reason for the friends of the other candidate opposing such a plan. Just in proportion as one urged this was the other impressed with the necessity of avoiding it.

The strategy of J. Jones Pinkerton seemed now to serve an excellent point for his party and he was proportionally congratulated on his shrewdness; but it also suggested some points to his enemies. They at once set about providing a counter attraction. The Fair Ground was rented for that day, the Catchemtown brass band engaged, a grand picnic was arranged, the receipts from which were to be applied to a local charity. A long programme of games, with prizes to be awarded, was announced to follow the refreshments served at noon.

Our friends, who were bearing the expense of this philanthropic scheme in aid of the county poor advertised it as freely as their opponents had advertised the town hall meeting. The result was that between the two attractions the Riding of North Flat was stirred from center to circumference, and the morning of Nomination Day saw the country people coming into town by every concession and side-road. Not only the voters and the male population generally, but the farmer's wife and daughters came also. The picnic was a grand success. While yet the Town Hall was given up to the lonely presence of the returning officer and the four persons necessary to move and second the nominations of the two candidates, the village band was parading off to the Fair Ground, several blocks away, and the whole village went after it. With something more than the necessary delay attending such arrangements it happened that the tables were spread just at the hour appointed by our opponents for the opening of their mass meeting. Nobody was going to desert their dinner to hear a speech; at least nobody but such as were deeply interested in the success of the little scheme instituted by Pinkerton.

After the dinner came the games and the greater part of the crowd lingered for these. Besides word had been passed around freely that we were to have some speaking too if the people only waited for it; though when or where was left a mystery.

The meeting at the Town Hall drew its faithful few and with them a number of old and thoughtful heads curious to know who the "eminent speaker from a distance" might be and what he would have to say. But the "eminent gentleman" had missed a train, as the eminent gentlemen so often do. The speaking therefore had to be done by the indifferent stump orators who had been doing the county for weeks past and whose stock arguments and anecdotes were as worn as the language they had been repeatedly clothed in. As the meeting lengthened out, a few more, drawn by a desire to get a little of everything that was passing, had drifted over from the Fair Grounds to the hall, until as the last speaker got the floor there was a goodly representation of North Flat electors of both sides of political opinion present. This encouraged the speaker and he launched out freely in harsh condemnation of his opponents. Stung by the defeat of what they thought a clever bit of diplomacy concerning the hall, they were in a mood to allow their feelings to get the better of their judgment, and the last speaker went so far as to declare that "the opposition candidate was afraid to come upon the platform and defend his cause;" in fact he dared Mr. Guilford or any of his friends to come forward.

This was a most unfair challenge. The afternoon was advanced and the people were tired and uneasy to be starting homeward. The animus of this last-hour challenge was apparent even to those who were unacquainted with the previous refusal to give our side a hearing, and to those of our friends who knew the particulars this pretension of courage was very aggravating. But nobody seemed ready to respond.

While the friends of Our Candidate were still looking at one another in a stupefied silence there stepped to the front of the platform our over-grown awkward young friend from "the Corners," Jim Bigson. Nobody had noticed him, sitting in the very front seat throughout the long meeting, listening attentively to the best that was offered. It seemed as if he might have risen through the floor for all anyone had known before of his presence.

"Gentlemen," said Jim, "I accept the challenge the speaker has just concluded with and all I want to say is this, that the challenge is a dishonorable and cowardly one. Mr. Guilford and his friends asked several days ago that he be allowed to address this meeting to-day jointly with his opponent and he was refused, they having secured the hall and controlled it. Now, when the time is spent and they know Mr. Guilford is not present to accept the challenge thrown out they propose to make capital for themselves by daring him to come forward. It is a cowardly"—

But by this time the uproar was great and Jim's nervous voice and gesticulation were lost in that of the multitude. It was a great thing for a consciously awkward and bashful country boy to do, and tho' he was both large and strong his whole frame shook with nervous emotion. But his excitement seemed to the meeting only to give vehemence to the words he spoke. He had put in order in the moment that preceded his stepping upon the platform the sentence or two that would expose the trick of the men who had controlled the meeting and that much he uttered before the confusion within him and around him overcame him. What sort of a speech Jim would have been able to make in Our Candidate's behalf had the meeting given him a chance will never be known. He had as yet formed no strong party convictions though he was deeply interested in political questions, and it was only his strong sense of justice that had aroused him and forced him to his feet at this critical moment. But what he said was just what best served the purpose of the situation. That inherent sense of right in mankind which has always redeemed it from the charge of total depravity, was touched by Jim's words, and nothing could now prevent the meeting from giving the other

side a hearing. In the increasing clamor a pretense was made by the chairman of getting a hearing for the new found champion of Our Candidate; but it was only a pretense made in the spirit of ridicule, for as the noise lessened somewhat somebody on the platform proposed "three cheers for Smith," which was a hint to their friends to close the meeting.

Then was chaos come again. Amid cries of "Let the boy speak!" "Who is he?" "Throw him off!" Jim was crowded back and another attempt made to close the meeting by proposing "three cheers for the Queen."

At the same moment that Jim Bigson had sprung into the breach some of our friends in the back part of the meeting had recovered their wits sufficiently to be seized with the idea of running to tell Our Candidate of the challenge offered him, and just at this juncture he entered the hall, followed closely by Dr. Goliath and several other of his faithful henchmen. This was the signal for the most uproarious applause. Never had the Catchemtown Hall had its roof and walls so expanded by the acclaim of people gathered in it. Our two leaders were lifted upon the shoulders of their friends and carried over the heads of the crowd to the platform; order was soon partially established, and as Our Candidate began to address the meeting in his quiet and deliberate way a great many of his noisiest opponents left the hall, mortified beyond endurance at the turn things had taken by reason of that injudicious challenge and Jim Bigson's acceptance of it.

Our Candidate did not speak long, for his friend, the Doctor, was the man to turn to fullest account such an opportunity as this. As he came forward our friends rent the air with expressions of approval. The man of natural oratorical power was moved by the situation to do his best and he did it. One after another of those of our opponents who were on the platform when the tables were turned excused themselves upon one pretext and another and drifted out. It was very late, and the people very tired, and even our own friends could not all be held by the power of the Doctor's eloquence. They went they said to get something to eat and would return. But outsiders learning what had transpired at the Town Hall drifted in and an audience of fair proportions was kept up through the supper hour. A pause was made by the speaker until the lamps could be lighted and in the interim our brass band which had been brought into the hall played a stirring selection. The while this was going on the speaker kept his feet and his place on the platform lest one of the enemy should spring up to speak;

and again he launched into his subject. He arraigned the Government on every conceivable issue of the campaign, and when he had exhausted all the counts he went back to the first. The audience that had grown small grew large again, until all the space was occupied; and still the talker talked on, until his friends behind him smiled at his oft reiterated arguments and even the changing audience felt something of monotony in the discourse. But the Doctor was evidently bent on showing North Flat what he could do in an emergency, and he kept the floor until such a late hour that there could be no possibility of the enemy returning to occupy it. Then his almost unanimous meeting gave him three rousing cheers, three were given for Our Candidate, three for the leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition, and three and a tiger for the Queen; and Nomination Day in North Flat, which had once loomed up so darkly before our friends closed in a signal victory for Our Candidate and our cause.

CHAPTER XXIV.

FATHER INNOCENT'S PICNIC.

There was a great deal of worldly wisdom in the arrangement by which the congregation of St. Yusef's Church held their annual picnic in the last days of an exciting political campaign, when party feeling ran the highest. There were various schemes and devices by which this partisan enthusiasm could be made to temporarily obscure religious differences and prejudices and turn money into the church coffers. And as the managers of the picnic had shown no compunction about making religious capital out of the political commotions of the campaign, so the promoters of the political fortunes of the North Flat candidates felt no backwardness about using the picnic as a means to further their ends. If there were some features of the picnic not consistent with professions of piety, they were equally inconsistent with the professed honesty of politics. But our professions and aspirations have always been a satire on our deeds and institutions, and there would have been nothing incongruous about this mingling of politics and religion if it had not been for the childlike innocence with which all such relations are disavowed.

The unfortunate turn of the nomination day meeting had been a grievous thing for the Conservatives, and another effort must be made to unite and enthuse their forces for election day, now so

close at hand. The candidates being invited were given full leave to invite their friends, and the result was an array of oratorical talent from distant cities such as had not graced any of the purely political gatherings of the campaign.

The young ladies of St. Yusef's Church had been active and persistent in the sale of tickets for Father Innocent's picnic. Their visits and the assurance with which they made their demands for patronage made them a social aggravation to the people of North Flat. The young men of Catchemtown, who, for the most part lived upon limited salaries, were cornered behind counters and office chairs by a bevy of the fair creatures and importuned in such a personal way that life became a perpetual nightmare to them. The girls went in companies with the apparent purpose of reinforcing one another in the colloquial siege laid to a particularly hard-faced citizen. A church entertainment being close at hand, whenever a suspected group of such young ladies appeared on the distant horizon, the susceptible citizen would beat a hasty retreat, making a back room or an upper story in double quick time. But if they came upon him suddenly, he either capitulated without resistance or boldly asserted that he had a ticket. If he had bought one he was very apt to have it with him, as a certificate of character. If he could not produce it, he had to buy another. To so impugn a man's veracity, or badger him thus in any common cause would have been to violate even the unpolished conventionalities of rural society. But in the cause of religion, it is warrantable and even praiseworthy.

By this plan many a church society was guaranteed a successful entertainment, regardless of the programme offered or the weather that prevailed. Having made a forced investment in the interests of religion, the investor either lacked faith in the ultimate reward of such an investment, or was mercenary enough to want two profits, and was almost invariably in attendance.

But time and circumstances all favored the congregation of St. Yusef's, and Father Innocent's picnic gave promise of great success. The people of Rover Township of every religious faith and both political creeds turned out in large numbers and the exhibition grounds of the agricultural society at Rover Centre presented an animated scene. The religious zeal with which the feminine portion of a community enters into a church undertaking was in this instance reinforced by the interest which the political phase of it awakened in the otherwise lethargic male portion.

There was nothing about the religious body of which the congregation of St. Yusef's was a part by which a wise and impartial administration of public affairs would affect them differently from

the way it affected a Methodist or an Episcopalian. But in an earlier age of the world, when political power was only another name for religious domination, the previous generations of these people of different faiths had been made to suffer bitter things at the hands of the party in supremacy, and it was not easy now to make the less numerous body believe that they were not still taken advantage of when the opportunity offered. And knowing that men change very slowly for the better they were hardly to be blamed for the weakness of their faith in the political virtues of a religious enemy. Of that weakness there were not wanting men to take advantage, and by nursing with tenderest solicitude the inherited memory of past wrongs they were able to combine and traffic in the votes of these religious classes. The party leaders had learned that they could purchase a measure of support by placing a member of a certain religious body in a position of prominence and patronage, and they frequently did it. In this campaign, one of the most deliberate and brazen appeals to the prejudices and selfishness of a section of the electorate had been made by the leader of the government in elevating to a representative position a man who had openly confessed his sympathy with and participation in the schemes of an organization which had for its avowed object the dismemberment of the empire. The advancement of this man to a place he could never have obtained on his own merits, by the party which had continually boasted of its loyalty to the throne, had a fine vein of humor in it for those who were given to studying their political bed-fellows. Nothing could have been more apparent from such a selection than that such devices are mainly intended to influence the least intelligent elements of a particular body. He was brought forward as one of the speakers at Father Innocent's picnic, with some more honorable men, and though he occupied more time and made himself more conspicuous than the rest, there was reason to hope, from the generous spirit of his utterances, that such companionship was more beneficial to himself than injurious to his hearers.

But platform declamation, when it has no apparent antagonism in it, soon becomes wearisome to an audience, and the virtuous platitudes and mild political insinuations of a religio-political picnic hardly sustained any interest beyond a curiosity to see what the personal appearance of the political lions was.

A feature of the picnic that was more to the purpose of its originators was the putting up of a gold-headed cane, to be presented to that party's candidate which received the largest number of votes, the voting power, in this case as in the electoral

franchise, being a question of financial qualification—a vote being counted for every five cents the friends of the respective candidates were willing to deposit in the church coffers.

Pretty country girls, whose sweet persuasiveness strengthened into assurance until it threatened to turn the rosy tint upon their cheeks to a metallic hue, flitted about the grounds in the harmonious interest of their church and the rival interests of their respective candidates. The men joined in the canvass with all the enthusiasm of a regular election day. It was understood on both sides that the winning or losing of the cane would have its effect upon the actual voting on the following Tuesday, and the interest increased with every announcement of the state of the poll. The excitement was contagious, and after a few bulletins had been published there were very few people on the grounds who had not taken sides on the cane question and contributed one or more votes. Some of the excitable partisans invested all they had in their purses and then joined the girls in soliciting from others. Some of cooler judgment and more wisdom preferred to use their money in betting on the winner, and large stakes were in some instances put up, to the great scandal of the girls and matrons of the church.

Miss Toll was present, as she invariably was in any important church enterprise, a leader among her own sex and a queen over both. But this was not a usual occasion with her. There was a deeper concern in her mind regarding what was transpiring about her than she had heretofore felt. The girlish abandon that had before characterized her when she joined a party of her young friends in church gatherings was now suddenly laid aside. Her deep interest in the result of the voting restrained her, instead of impelling her to action. But she could not analyze her feelings in such surroundings, and her friends were too much absorbed in the success of the occasion to note her abstraction.

She had received no answer to her letter to John Swanson, and a sense of burning indignation arose in her mind whenever she thought of his spurning her self-sacrifice and ignoring her communication. She hated him now, and not him only but, since her father's digression, all that political element of which Swanson was a part.

She stood for a time alone, beyond the border of the crowd that thronged about the polling booth and bulletin board and saw or caught from the crowd the fluctuating returns from the ballot box.

"Your influence is cast on the other side this time, Miss Toll," said J. Jones Pinkerton, approaching Nora with his usual half-

patronizing manner and tone, which in this case he tried to modulate into something non-committal between regret and unconcern. It was the studied style of the political wire-puller who never commits himself definitely to anything, but the modulation was made a little more difficult in this case by reason of the speaker's personal interest in the person addressed.

In some indefinable way Nora Toll had to-day been made to feel as her father did the unexpressed condemnation by his friends for the desertion of his party, and it might have been this or the self-consciousness of her interest in one of the candidates that made her answer take the form of a defense.

"I have always tried to be on the side of right," she said.

"I do not think there is much choice in party politics," said Pinkerton, in a tone that left it in doubt whether he meant to defend his own party or disparage the other.

"I suppose they are what individuals make them," said Nora, in the same measured tone that might or might not mean any particular individuals.

"Your vote and influence is respectfully solicited for John Smith," said John Swanson, breaking into the labored conversation between Pinkerton and Miss Toll, with a loud voice and a form of obeisance to the lady that was intended to be complaisant without expressing any genuine feeling. Seeing Pinkerton in conversation with the woman his selfish nature had only really begun to desire when there was evident prospect of some one else obtaining her, his envious jealousy had forced him to disregard the Colonel's severe note of dismissal, and with as much of the indifferent air as under the circumstances he could assume, he went on, "Smith is going to win, and I know both of you want to be on the winning side."

Pinkerton may have waited in deference to the sex for Nora to reply to Swanson's rally. At any rate he did not answer. He really liked Swanson as little as Miss Toll did, though he had never regarded him as a rival for her affections. It was rather as an interrupter of his *tete-a-tete* conversations with Miss Toll in her home in times past as now on the picnic grounds that Pinkerton had come to ardently detest the fellow.

"Not so anxious if 'Smith and winning' must go together," said Nora, her animosity toward Swanson and his political associates leading her into an expression of feeling that might be construed as interest in Our Candidate instead of what she would have herself and them believe was only love for her father. On the instant her countenance changed from the expression of bravado with which she had uttered the words to one of chagrin

at her mistake, but she was saved from the danger of attempting to mend it, by a group of girls, who, seeing her apparently loitering, paused in their onset upon the picnickers' purses to get her important aid.

"Come and help us, Miss Toll. Smith's away ahead, and we have only half an hour before the poll closes!"

It was an opportune invitation for Nora, and she accepted it, saying an indifferent "good afternoon," which Swanson could not fail to interpret as intended more for Pinkerton than himself.

As the last minutes of the voting drew nigh the excitement became intense. The vote was counted every three minutes. Father Innocent's assistant grasped the skirts of his tunic with one hand and steadying himself with the other, mounted a barrel and cried: "Only ten minutes more!" "Get in your votes!" "Only seven minutes more!" "Only five minutes more!" "Canvassers will now deposit all the money they have, and those who want to vote must come up to the ballot boxes!" "Bring all in now!" shouted the man of God, as he grasped his sacerdotal robes again and climbed carefully down from the barrel.

While the early part of the campaign had been left to the young ladies and such voluntary help as they could get from the men, it was not so when the last moments of the voting arrived. With great foresight our friends had relaxed their energies when the last hour was reached, and allowed the other candidate's friends to run him ahead until they began to plume themselves that the enemy's resources were exhausted. But the figures on the blackboard only increased the determination of our friends to win. Subscriptions were privately taken up and the sum held until the last count before closing the poll was announced. Then a draft for the whole amount, drawn by a well known and wealthy supporter of Our Candidate, was folded carefully within a dollar note so that the small denomination of the note could be seen by all about the ballot boxes as it dropped. The amount of the draft was made to over-lap by several dollars the last majority of the other candidate. But to guard against a final surprise by the enemy another device was arranged. A roll of $150.00 was furnished from the hidden source of campaign funds and this was given to Bill Saunders, who stood near the box ready to drop the sum at the last moment if the occasion seemed to demand it. The same idea seemed to have seized our opponents, for J. Jones Pinkerton was seen to edge his way up to the ballot boxes as the last moments arrived. The two men glared at one another and almost simultaneously they raised their hands and held them over the openings in the boxes. Each was confident that the majority

as it stood was in his favor, and each waited for the other to drop the money. The gathering about the ballot-boxes had crowded itself into a compact mass that entirely shut out any more voting, and the nervous tension had reached that height where it changes from noisy acclaim to silent intensity.

Probably in the expectation that something would occur to break the spell and cause the two North Flat political schemers to lose their hold on the money suspended over the boxes, it was announced that the time of voting was extended five minutes. But this had not the effect intended. There was renewed crowding and noise on the outer edges of the crowd, but about the boxes it remained intact, and for five minutes more the two men stood with their hands on the ballot boxes and their eyes fixed on each other in a half-angry, half-amused scowl.

The boxes were closed. The final summing up was proceeded with and figure after figure placed upon the bulletin board, with what seemed to the crowd exasperating slowness.

So intent had been the interest of the crowd on the proceedings that nobody seemed to have noticed the clouds gathering overhead, nor the first drops of a shower now falling.

GUILFORD 8–6–4–

Read the figures of the official scribe on the blackboard. Then instead of adding the final figure he wrote below,

SMITH 8–6–4–

The crowd stood statue-like in its interest.

Then going back he added to the Guilford line a "7."

Everybody stood on tip-toe and strained and jostled to catch the last figure, "4."

Up went the shout for Our Candidate, and the clouds in the heavens were as nothing in blackness to the clouds on the faces of the chop-fallen enemy.

CHAPTER XXV.

A POLITICAL MARTYR.

The rain that had begun falling as the picnic broke up, continued and increased, and the picnickers, after waiting a time in hopes of a clearing-up, began to take to their vehicles in the face of the storm. Our Candidate, who had purposely avoided Nora during the day because of the sensitiveness he knew she and her father suffered by reason of his renunciation of former political

allies, now felt at liberty to present himself, and Miss Toll and the Colonel were driven home in Our Candidate's covered carriage, completely sheltered from the storm.

The result of the voting had been a little nearer a tie than Our Candidate and his friends intended it to be, but the majority, such as it was, was in his favor, and when he handed over the cane for Miss Toll's inspection, as they seated themselves in the carriage, he was thinking much more of the influence its winning would have upon the undecided electors of North Flat, than its intrinsic value or the sum it had cost him. If he had not been too much absorbed in the double effort to be gallant to Miss Toll while his thoughts turned incessantly to the doings of the day and the influences that were at work for and against him in these last remaining days of the campaign, he might have observed the sinister glances of J. Jones Pinkerton, who stood with others under the veranda of the Farmer's Exchange, watching the picnickers set out for home in a down-pour of rain. Or if Nora had not been in what had become a charmed presence to her, as she listened to Our Candidate's disconnected comments, first on the social and then the political features of the day's gathering, she might have had a woman's intuitional sense of an evil presence when John Swanson's carriage dashed almost savagely past hers. But neither Our Candidate, nor the girl who had become so deeply interested in his success, had any conception of the spirit of evil they had stirred in the two men who had been watching them during much of the day on the picnic ground.

"I want to spend the whole of Monday among the people in 'Sleepy Hollow,'" said Our Candidate. "That's the last day before the voting, and the Hollow has always gone strongly against us, but if I can do a little work there at the last moment, and hold a meeting there Monday night, I think I can materially reduce the majority against us. We don't want to stir up the enemy any more than we can help, however, so I have called a meeting in the extreme southeast of the Riding for Saturday night and had it advertised pretty loudly, so as to divert suspicion from the 'Hollow' meeting. I shall have to forego the Colonel's kind invitation on this, the last Sunday of the campaign, and spend the day in the southeast corner. I've neglected them terribly over there, and they are my best friends."

"Your best friends?" said Nora, with an expression of surprise that somewhat betrayed her disappointment at the announcement that Our Candidate was not going to spend Sunday at his usual rendezvous, the Colonel's. "What position do you give father and me in the order of your friendships?"

"Oh, come, now," said Our Candidate. "You understood me better than that. You know I was speaking of neighborhoods and their political friendships, not individuals and their personal—"

He hesitated. It might be that he was at a loss for a word to complete the sentence without a repetition.

"Regard," he added; and would have gone quickly on if the Colonel had not broken in with:

"Do you think the scheme of bringing the new Catholic Senator into the Riding to speak to-day is going to influence the vote of our church people much?"

The Colonel had, up to this, been an indifferent listener from his place in the front seat, but the words "political friendships" had broken the spell of his meditations, and suggested this inquiry.

"No," said Our Candidate. "Father Innocent is my friend, and he that is for me is greater among his parishioners, than all they can bring against me. With his influence and yours I am going to poll the biggest Catholic vote ever polled by a Liberal candidate in North Flat. Father Innocent is naturally a man of Liberal views, and also a man of generous impulses. He can't very well help sympathizing with the under dog in any fight. If he were over in Ireland now nothing could prevent him from favoring the cause of the tenantry."

"I'm glad we're about home," said the Colonel, "for it looks as if this was going to be an all night rain."

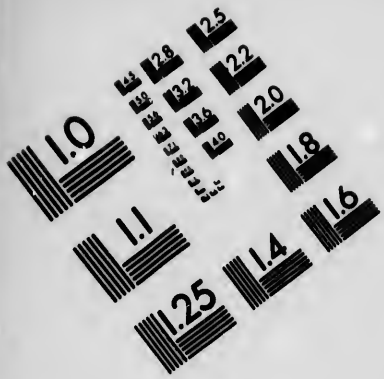
It was evident that the Colonel did not care to discuss the delicate relations between the church and politics. It was the sore spot in his mind ever since his change of political front, and he had had it chafed not a few times that day in mingling with so many old acquaintances. He was conscious that he had lost caste with the friends of many years, who were not at all to blame for the things which had driven him out of the party, and whose coldness was to him well nigh heart-breaking. If they could only have been generous enough to distinguish between the sterling character of the man and his political views, as he did between them and the soulless wire-pullers of the party, who were using them as they had used him, for their own profit, he would have been strong in the new steps he was taking. But it was not so. He had left the old party lines where he was a leader and a factor, and where his politics and his religion had run so nearly in concurrent channels. He had joined hands with the opposing party, and how did he know that its leaders were moved by any higher motive than those he had left? Had

not Our Candidate just confessed that he depended much upon this political apostasy for his gain? If he could only be sure that the common selfishness he condemned in others, had not first had something to do with bringing himself to acknowledge the liberal convictions he had long entertained, he would have found more solace in the integrity of his purpose. As it was, he had been suffering a sort of mental martyrdom all day, and that again could add little to his depression of spirits. Nevertheless was glad when the carriage drove up to Wellington Gate, and he and Nora were back again under the shelter of their own roof.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE INTERCEPTED LETTER.

Mrs. Toll had not gone to the church picnic. Much merit as the two heads of this household saw in each other, they did not see alike in matters of religion and all the love they bore each other was not quite equal to the antipathy they felt for alien faiths. So Mrs. Toll persistently but unostentatiously went her own way to heaven, leaving the Colonel and Nora to go jointly on theirs. The daughter, one of a later generation, youthful yet and confiding, was a malleable link in the domestic chain that held father and stepmother in loving adjustment to herself and to each other and drew them over many a rock and shoal that two strong and ardent natures would otherwise have wrecked upon. Mrs. Toll loved her beautiful and altogether lovable step-daughter in spite of the consciousness that there must be a nearer and dearer relationship existing between father and child. Indeed she understood that and allowed for it in every domestic incident that called forth its expression. She was content with the relation in which circumstances had placed her to both of them, for she knew that their love for her was as genuine in its way as are any of the ties that bind men and women to each other. It was this and her home-spun precept that "little but food spoils by waiting" which led her, when she saw that Nora and the Colonel had some mysterious matter wearing on both their minds, to leave them to themselves. It was probably a matter relating to the time before she became a member of the household and with which, strictly speaking, she had nothing to do.



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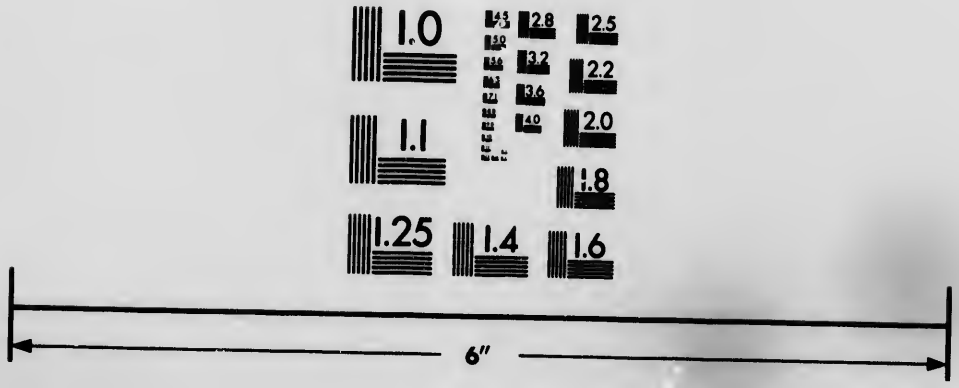

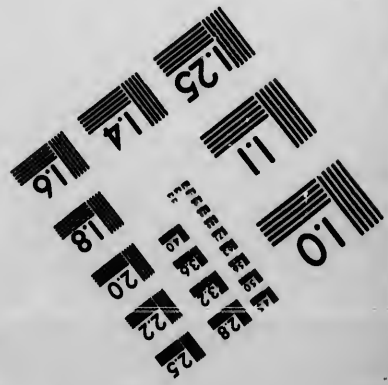

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The only deviation Mrs. Toll had made from her domestic policy was the intercepting of Nora's letter. Why she had done it she did not know. The withholding of the letter was an impulse which ever since she would have given her right hand that she had not yielded to. Having taken it, the sense of justice returned to her sufficiently to prevent her opening and reading it. But she had not forwarded it to its destination. Day after day the little note in the dainty envelope had stayed in her pocket, though it hung like a millstone at her side and made very wretched a sturdy mind and body that would not have faltered a jot under the heaviest physical load. She had questioned herself over and over again as to the reason of her taking it and could find no answer that satisfied her intelligence; on the contrary, such conclusions as she came to only aggravated her strong common-sense. Between forwarding it to the person addressed and returning it to Nora with an apology for the interference her mind was at variance with itself. To forward it now would be almost as unwarrantable as taking it, and to return it to the writer meant a humiliation to which her pride could not easily be brought. Under this mental strain she was rapidly becoming as morose as Nora and the Colonel.

Left alone on the day of the picnic, her thoughts turned more troublesomely than ever toward the letter, and before the day was out she had come to a conclusion in regard to it. She would return it to the dresser in Nora's room, placing it not too conspicuously but laying it among other odds and ends that decorate a young lady's boudoir, as if it might thereby discover itself more gently to the owner. If on the finding of it by Nora its presence created a disturbance she would candidly acknowledge her misdoing and as far as she might have power repair the injury she had done.

When Nora returned to her chamber late that dull, rainy evening her letter lay amongst her toilet articles. But unanswered and half-answered letters often lay there, and that one was sufficiently thrust aside not to attract special attention.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"ALL HONORABLE MEN."

It was Sunday evening. The rain that had set in when the picnic was closing had kept up with the exception of very slight intervals ever since. It was a regular autumn down-pour that

had softened the roads and swollen the streams until travel was well nigh impossible. Ditches and natural water-ways were overflowed and bridges washed away, and the heavy clay of Flat County furnished the worst kind of a road-bed. Col. Toll said it was only one of their usual three-day rains and would stop before morning. But Nora, who had passed a wretched Sunday in what seemed to her a deserted house, though it contained Father and Mother as it had commonly done, declared that there was nothing usual about it. It had never rained so hard since she was born, and rain had never seemed so dreary as it was today. If there had not been a positive promise to the contrary she would have declared the deluge had come again.

But as the night came on there was a lull in the dreary downfall. The moon actually struggled out from behind the clouds, and it looked as if the Colonel's prediction was going to be fulfilled. Nora had tried to cheer her father with some music, but her playing to-night was of the most mechanical sort, and her voice positively refused to raise a note. She could not compose her mind to read, and she went early to her room. Not because she expected to sleep but because it offered a change from the rooms where she had spent the day. She took her book with her in the hope that the effort to read might drive her to sleep. As she stood at an eastern window, watching the moon's occasional reflections through a temporary break in the clouds and thinking somewhat of the struggle between darkness and light going on just now about her in the realm of the moral and spiritual as well as the physical world, she heard a vehicle draw up at the gate.

With the step of expectancy she crossed the room to the opposite window and peered through the smallest possible crevice of the curtain, having taken the precaution to turn her lamp low as she passed it. There were three men. It was not quite light enough to distinguish who they were, but she knew who they were not, and the expression of hope on her face a moment ago changed to one of curiosity.

Something pressing, surely, had brought them on such a night, and it was something of a political nature of course, for nothing else seemed to interest anybody in North Flat just then. At all events Nora was so much interested in politics at this time that the propriety of being a listener to a conversation not intended for her ears did not seem to occupy her mind for more than a moment. She had got sufficient from her father in the interview recorded to convince her that a political plot was at the bottom of this Swanson money mystery, and if this was another scheme to in

some way involve her father, she was justified in seeking to know what it was. If she went down to the parlor she could not remain when her presence seemed undesirable. Her mother had retired early, and was no doubt sleeping the sleep of the just, for there was nothing in a rainy day to disturb the persistent equanimity of Mrs. Toll's spirit. She had heard nothing about the returned letter and had about come to the conclusion that it contained nothing of great import. As to politics, she had got the Colonel over to her way of thinking, at last, and she believed it would take more years than she had labored for any outside influences to win him back again. Her sanguine temperament made her believe that Our Candidate was going to be elected. How could it be otherwise now that the Colonel was on the Reform side? And finally, she had read the secret of Our Candidate's interest in her stepdaughter, a consummation that had suggested itself to her mind the very first day Our Candidate took dinner at the Colonel's.

All these things were just as she would have them, and what wonder that she slept soundly now, though the Colonel sat up later than usual these nights, and "didn't come to bed to sleep then," as she expressed it.

With the thought that if it was a matter that did not concern her she could return to her room again, Nora put out her light and went on tip-toe into the spare bedroom, which was located directly over the parlor and between which rooms the pipe-hole of the parlor stove communicated. With Mrs. Toll's happy faculty for putting the fair side to London in every matter of housekeeping she had made a strange device of fir cones that filled and hung pendant from the pipe-hole, thus disguising in summer time a gaping aperture in the ceiling. Beside this hole Nora knelt and after a little effort was able to catch quite plainly the words of the speakers and to recognize their voices.

"He is going 'round the country quietly boasting to his friends that he has bought up the whole Catholic Church, and that with you and Father Innocent as the bell-wethers he can kraal the whole flock," said a voice that Nora recognized as that of J. Jones Pinkerton.

"What proof have you that he has said so?" Nora heard her father ask.

"Why, Wesley here had it nearly in those words from Bill Saunders, and we have a letter that verifies it," and Pinkerton could be heard shuffling a handful of papers he had taken from his pocket.

"Did you hear Saunders say that?" asked the Colonel in a tone that Nora heard and trembled at, for she knew his temper was rising.

"Yes," spoke up the other of the party Nora had seen enter the gate but whose voice she could not identify, "and he said the Tory Presbyterians in the Riding wouldn't vote for such a mongrel Protestant as Smith."

"I did not inquire of you," said the Colonel emphatically, and turning persistently to the man called Wesley.

"Yes," said Wesley, in short emphatic answer to the question he had seemed anxious to avoid.

"Will you make oath to it?" said the Colonel; and Nora thought she could see her father reaching for the holy book on which to swear the man who had come to put enmity between the two men she had so much faith in.

"If you refuse to accept what we say on our word of honor," said Pinkerton, putting the papers back into his pocket with a show of indignation, "it would be useless to show you this letter. Come, Wesley, I think I have done my duty as a fellow churchman," and Pinkerton made a feint of going.

"Well, I am sorry to say I have lost faith in some who were once my professed friends," said the Colonel, "and I don't believe Guilford would make any such statement as you have attributed to him."

"Perhaps you would like to see this letter," said Pinkerton, astonished at the Colonel's coolness, and trying to preserve his own.

He drew the packet of papers from his pocket again and handed one to the Colonel.

"You will recognize that writing at once, I have no doubt," said Pinkerton, handing the letter opened ready to the Colonel's eyes.

The Colonel took it and read:

MY DEAR CHORE:

I do not take any stock in that breed of sheep, but I suppose I must do as other candidates have done. I have left an additional hundred at the place you designated.

I have seen Father Innocent myself, and know what I am talking about when I say *it is all right.* The Colonel is now with us also, and those two forces settle the question of the Catholic vote.

Yours in haste, T. G.

"Well, what do you propose to do now?" said the Colonel, accepting his visitors' construction of the letter, for he knew Our Candidate's penmanship too well to have any doubt about the genuineness of the document.

"Just this," said Joshua Jones Pinkerton, coolly taking a seat as he spoke. "We propose to denounce this scandal on the Catholic electors of North Flat."

"And how?" asked the Colonel.

"Well, it would do no good to blazon it to everybody, because he would deny it and it would simply be a question of veracity."

"In which he would have the advantage," said the Colonel, sarcastically.

"No, but we propose to depend fairly and honorably upon the independence and intelligence of the Catholic electors of the county, and we will issue a private circular which will go only into the hands of Catholics. We have come to ask for your signature, as one of the leading Catholics of the Riding, and a man who has shown by his own independent course that he would have every man vote according to the dictates of his own conscience. The circular is not a party one. It will simply state the facts and leave every elector to judge for himself. Here is what we have drawn up:

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL.

To the Free and Independent Catholic Electors of the North Riding of Flat:

It having been currently reported by certain persons that the Catholic Electors of this Riding are being coerced and compelled to vote according to a bargain and sale of their franchise entered into by certain persons of prominence and authority among them, we, the undersigned, hereby protest against this scandal and outrage committed upon the free and intelligent Catholic electors of North Flat and urge upon every such elector the duty of repelling the slander by casting his vote independent of any previous consideration and especially in condemnation of this libelous report.

"We intend to put a copy of this in the hands of every elector as he comes up to vote on Tuesday morning," continued Pinkerton. "You will see that it is aimed particularly at those who are alleged to have sold the Catholic vote, and it is for you to say whether you can afford to have it go out without your name, seeing that your name is prominently connected with the alleged conspiracy."

"I am not guilty," said the Colonel, rising from his chair as if to emphasize the declaration.

"Then there can be nothing wrong in your saying so, by putting your name to this circular; and it ought to be the first name in order to give emphasis to the denial," suggested Pinkerton.

"Read it again," said the Colonel.

Pinkerton read it.

"It puts me under no obligation to change my own views," said the Colonel.

"Not at all," said Pinkerton. "It is purely a protest against a scandal upon our faith and our church, and I believed it would

commend itself to your high moral sense, Colonel, else I should not have called on you."

The Colonel had found his pen, and his daughter could hear him attaching his signature to the circular.

Nora had made up her mind as she listened what she would do, and the scratching of her father's pen on the paper seemed to her the signal for action. Her only thought was to make known what she had learned to the man in whom she was interested. She did not wait to learn whether this was the end of the plot, but hastened quietly to her room and put on her wraps, musing as she did so:

"What if this letter meant what they said it did? What did he mean by speaking of the people of her faith as sheep? Surely it was only an inference that the Father Superior's influence had been bought? Or was he too a schemer, trading on the sacred attachments of the church and religion and on her father's influence? Could it be possible that his attentions to her were only a part of the political plot?"

She paused on the threshold of her chamber door a moment to think. Our impressions are so apt to be determined by our feelings, and Nora as she knelt on the floor and listened to Pinkerton's voice, had taken but one view of the matter. Now that Pinkerton's disagreeable presence was removed she could think with less bias.

Had Guilford not said on the way home from the picnic that with Father Innocent and her father for him he would poll the largest Catholic Reform vote ever cast in the county?

Yes, but he meant nothing dishonest. There was no underhand work hinted at. He meant only the moral influence of the two men. He did not make any secret of his hope of advantage from it.

These men came in the darkness of night to accuse him.

But there was the letter in his own handwriting. Her father could hardly be deceived in that.

Still she could not believe him guilty of this scandal on the church and upon her father's honor.

Thus a woman's reasoning faculties played hide-and-seek with her affections and the game ended, as a woman's logic always does, with a verdict for her heart rather than her head.

Although what her father felt chiefly as another unjust reflection on the motives of his political a[illegible]n rose up in Nora's mind to the proportions of a heinous offe[illegible]gainst those two dearest interests she had yet known, her Ch[illegible]ch and her father, she could not believe Our Candidate guilty. Only one day remained

in which to act for or against him. She would go to him and tell him what she had seen and heard, even at the risk of all the suffering such a venture might entail on health, and the humiliation of finding that she had helped a political trickster who cared nothing for her.

While the Colonel was extending those common hospitalities that seem due even to political enemies Nora, wrapped in a light water-proof, was in the saddle and out upon the road. She understood horsemanship better than the average farmer's daughter, and she and "Prince," the Colonel's finest animal, understood each other perfectly. He was Nora's noble pet and favorite, and she had but to speak his name or lay her hand upon his glossy neck and "Prince" seemed to realize her presence in every nerve and fibre of his great strong body. Taken from the stable at this unseemly hour, and with a silence not characteristic of his fair rider's treatment of him, he may have questioned, if horses do question, the cause and necessity of such procedure, but he made no demur, and Nora had but to pat his heavy mane affectionately to induce him to step as rapidly as the darkness and the mud and his precious burden would allow.

Our Candidate had mentioned his intention to drive all night from the south in order to be in "The Hollow" early the next morning, and Nora, by taking the town-line, expected to meet him somewhere on the road.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DEEDS OF DARKNESS.

"This is very bad weather to get about," said Pinkerton as he and his companions buttoned up their coats to go, "but you see we have only to-morrow to settle this thing in, and we had to hunt up these signatures to-day. I like to fight square, Colonel," he continued with a show of frankness, "and if they beat us Tuesday I shall believe it is because you went against us this time," and with this effort at good-nature the chief political schemer of North Flat and his two confederates went out into the darkness again.

The Colonel sat thinking on what he had done and wondering if there were any such thing as virtue under the sun Could it be possible that this attempt of his to assert his right of voting according to the inclinations of his own mind had subjected him

to the suspicion of having entered into a base compact with the other party to sell his influence over other men for dollars? Was this the faith the people of Flat County reposed in him after twenty years of conscientious effort to promote the well being of the county? He had felt their coldness for some time past, and this was the explanation of it. Well, perhaps he had deserved their suspicion, for had he not a haunting memory of one dishonest act that brought self-condemnation whenever he thought of it? They knew of it, too; some of them. How many? Perhaps Swanson had circulated his threatened exposure privately, in order to strengthen this new suspicion. That would serve his purpose better than publishing it, for then it could have been met and answered. Besides, there was the fact that he had been impelled to the independence for which he was suffering partly out of revenge for the infidelity of his friends when he was ambitious for the Wardenship. Truly, he was not better than those he had been condemning.

"But he had not done wrong in signing that paper," he mused; "there was no injustice to any one in that."

In this way the Colonel sat nursing his changing moods of contrition and of cynicism until long past midnight, his gloomy spirits intensified by the pelting rain upon the roof, for the storm had come up with renewed fury, accompanied by heavy thunder and flashes of lightning.

The storm had burst afresh just as Nora was nearing Muggins' Corners, and it kept up with such fury that it seemed as if she must seek shelter. The open driving shed under Muggins' Hall offered its protecting roof without the necessity of waking anybody. She would take advantage of that until the heaviest of the shower had passed, and she turned her horse's head toward it when a flash of lightning showed her the way.

Somewhat to Nora's surprise she found two saddled horses already under the shed. Whose could they be? There were no lights in the hotel to indicate the recent arrival of travelers. There were no lights in any of the houses of the little settlement Nora could not recognize the animals in the brief flashes of light the heavens gave, and yet she knew the horses of the neighborhood as well as she knew the people. But these were strange to her. They did not belong in that section she was sure.

While she kept her seat in the saddle and puzzled her wits to tell how this journey upon which she had so hastily set out was likely to terminate, she heard a mumbled conversation overhead. Sitting in the saddle her head nearly touched the floor of the hall above and the door at the top of the open stairway stood

open. It was evident the riders of the two horses had gone up there to wait the abatement of the storm.

Nora listened. It was the old and omnipresent theme, politics.

"Well," said one voice, after a yawn, accompanied by a further noise which indicated that its owner had risen from the floor and approached the window, "if this rain don't let up soon it'll be too late to get to the 'Holler' before daylight and the old place'll be too wet to burn after it's lighted."

"Oh, it'll go if it's ever started," said the second voice; "it's dryer'n an old corn crib; it's b'n built so long."

"Yes," returned the first speaker, "the opening o' the Sleepy Hollow Hall was a big thing for the Protestant Mics o' Flat County; I remember it well."

From this conversation Nora learned that there was a scheme afoot to burn the Sleepy Hollow Orange Hall. The incendiaries were no friends of Our Candidate it was evident from a further remark from one of them. But who they were she could not discover from their broken guttural voices, though she had alighted from her horse and noiselessly climbed the steps till as near the door as she dared to get.

Coming back she again inspected the two horses as closely as she could by the frequent but vivid flashes of light. They were not known to her. But she put her hands upon them and made certain that she could recognize them again if she should meet them. Her touch caused one of the animals to whinny, and Nora started, in fear that the presence of some one below would be suspected. She sprang quickly into the saddle, prepared to leave should the temporary lodgers in Muggins' Hall show a disposition to come down.

They did not seem to be easily alarmed, however, and Nora's previous suspicion that they were beguiling the hours with something to drink was strengthened by their apparent carelessness. The storm was abating and Nora was in a quandary as to what course to pursue. Should she go by the way of the "Hollow" and alarm some of the villagers, or should she take the shorter road she had intended and leave the Hall to take care of itself? A strange presentiment that had oppressed her all the day seemed to say that there was evil impending and ever since night-fall the danger seemed to be increasing, for her consciousness of it was intensified. If asked as to the propriety and wisdom of leaving her home on such a night and in secret she would have been at a loss to answer readily. If the mission of the men at her father's house was no more than they had alleged was there sufficient in it to warrant this midnight ride to meet Our Candidate?

But her coming had disclosed another plot, evidently intended to injure his cause, this plot to burn the hall where the meeting was to be held the following evening, and this did much to impress her with the belief that she was in some Providential way intended to do just what she was doing.

"I will not lose time by going out of the way," said Nora to herself; the conclusion of her brief deliberation. "I will keep the town line as I intended and when I get beyond the village I will call at a house where I am not likely to be known and give the alarm about the hall burning. I can do that and not take the risk of being interfered with in my journey by the kindness of some of the 'Hollow' people."

While yet she was concluding her plan Nora had ridden out into the rain again and pressed with what haste she could in the direction she intended to go.

She had passed a considerable distance beyoud the "Hollow" settlement before she began to pick out of the darkness a house whose inmates would not be likely to know her. First she tried a small house near the roadside, the neglected surroundings of which made it doubtful whether it were inhabited. Without dismounting she was able to reach the door and give it a heavy rapping. This finally brought a gruff response, and later the door was opened.

But it was quite another thing to make the sleepy individual who answered the knock understand what was wanted. And when he did seem to comprehend he showed no disposition to act.

"The hall ain't nuthin' to me, an' nobody's fool enough to try to burn anything a night like this," was his excuse.

Though Nora urged, it did not avail anything. The ungallant fellow questioned the truth of Nora's story and doubted the possibility of a woman being abroad on horseback at such an hour and on such a night with any good purpose, and finally gave Nora a positive refusal to stir an inch himself on such a night.

There was nothing for it but to try farther on. When another household had been disturbed and Nora's story of the incendiary plot told again, it was found that two young men of the family were members of the Order of Orange Young Britons, and they were not long in volunteering to give the alarm.

Satisfied that she had found means to avert one catastrophe, Nora urged on her horse in the pitchy darkness and the drizzling rain, her pathway only illumined by the occasional flashes from the heavens. By bridges and cross-roads she was able to take bearings of the locality as she passed along.

Peering into the darkness in expectation and eagerness and thinking how she might first apprise Our Candidate of her presence and the occasion of it, she found herself after another hour's solitary ride at the approach to a bridge that spanned the most turbulent of the several small streams that watered the country of North Flat. The heavy rains had added much to its volume and its current and between the splatters of her horse's hoofs she could hear the gurgling of the waters while yet some distance away. She drew the rein; an unnecessary reminder to "Prince" that he must step gently on the structure.

At that moment out of the dense darkness a voice said "Stop! You mustn't venture on the bridge."

For an instant Nora's heart stood still. But the last part of the sentence seemed an assurance that protection, and not injury was intended.

For a moment nobody spoke again, but the figure that had cried "Stop!" stepped in front of Nora's horse with the evident intention of preventing her from disobeying the order. Nora was conscious that there was another person present though he stood too much aside for her to distinguish even his outline. All three seemed to be waiting for another flash of lightning to introduce them to each other. They had not long to wait. It came, and went so instantaneously that Nora's eyes could not pass from one to the other in time for her to recognize the second man on the road. But to her astonishment the man at her horse's bridle proved to be John Swanson's hired man. She knew him well, and could not be mistaken.

What was the meaning of this? No harm to her surely, for they could never have expected to meet her there. The light had been sufficient to betray the man's surprise, as she felt her own, but whether it was surprise that the rider should prove to be Nora Toll, or simply that it should be any woman in such a place at such an hour, Nora did not know. The figure at a distance moved farther away and now Nora kept her eyes intently in that direction awaiting the next flash of lightning, for the recognition of the first figure had made her exceedingly anxious to know if the other was Swanson himself.

It was evident she had startled them, for neither seemed ready to speak, while all the time the figure farthest away was retreating. Nora could hear his footsteps in the mud. She turned her horse a step or two in that direction, determined to see by the next flash of light who it was. But before "Prince" had advanced a yard the lightning revealed the figure in retreat. It was Swanson, as near as she could tell from the man's size and dress.

Nora turned her horse toward the bridge again.

"I tell you you must not venture on the bridge," said the man who remained. "The high water is washing it away."

With the next flash of light Nora saw that the man had drawn his cap more upon his eyes and turned up the collar of his coat. There was also an effort at an unnatural tone of voice.

But the disguise had come too late. Nora was positive that she knew the man, and this made her quite sure that the retreating figure was none other than John Swanson. But she was thoroughly frightened. The unexpected voice out of the darkness added to the exhaustion of the night's ride and its experiences had been a great shock to her, and it was with the greatest difficulty she was able to keep in the saddle.

By the aid of the lightning she had discovered also the bright blades of a saw and an axe lying near where the men had interrupted her progress. By a great effort she was able to ask, with some authority in her voice as she supposed:

"What are you doing here to-night?"

If Nora thought to convey the idea that she knew the man was a long way from his accustomed place of abode at that time of night, he did not seem to so understand her nervous interrogation.

"Fixin' the bridge," he answered briefly.

"Can't I cross on it?" asked Nora.

"Not to-night."

"But I must," said Nora.

"You'll most likely be drownded if you do. Can't tell how it is till we get some daylight," said the man.

"Would it carry me, without the horse?" asked Nora, with an eagerness to be on the other side that amounted almost to frenzy. If Thomas Guilford had kept to his purpose of driving all night in order to be in the "Hollow" next morning he must surely be nearly this far on his way, and without warning he and his carriage would be plunged into the stream.

"Wouldn't say," answered the man, who it was very plain by this time did not intend to talk any more than he could help.

Nora, with an effort got down from the saddle and found herself scarcely able to lift her feet from the heavy mud. Tying "Prince" to the nearest fastening she could find she ventured upon the bridge, groping her way in the intervals between the flashes of lightning by keeping her hands upon the rude railing of the structure and stepping carefully lest the slightest jar added to her weight would cause it to give way.

The man she left behind stood watching her progress, so far as

she knew. Neither of them had spoken further when Nora essayed to cross without the horse.

She was getting on well, so well that now for the first time she began to think of what she would do after she was across. Her strength was fast failing her and it is doubtful if she could have reached the nearest house beyond the bridge had that been her decision. But she continued to grope her way on.

As she reached the other side she heard the splash of horses' hoofs. A conveyance of some sort was approaching It was almost at the bridge. She must stop it. Springing forward she uttered a faint, shrill cry of alarm and fell prostrate before the approaching vehicle.

A flash of lightning had at the same moment revealed to us in the carriage the bridge and the figure clutching its railing. The cry and fall were distinct enough to awaken us to the fact that something was amiss, and stopping our horses we climbed out and went forward. The lightning soon showed us where the woman had fallen and we lifted her up.

It required only the next flash of light to reveal to Our Candidate who she was. His surprise for a moment seemed to overpower him. But it was only for a moment. We lifted her into the carriage and drove as rapidly as the darkness would permit back to the nearest farm-house.

It seemed as if a great period of time elapsed before we got admittance to the house and restoratives applied.

But as morning broke and the storm passed away with the darkness, Nora awakened to consciousness. She was greatly exhausted, but she insisted on speaking. With frequent pauses for rest she explained to Our Candidate what had brought her out upon the road in such a storm. The visit of Pinkerton and his companions to her father's house and their charge that he had boasted of having bought her father's influence and the influence of the Father Superior; of the incendiaries she had overheard in Muggins' driving shed and of the meeting with Swanson and his hired man at the bridge.

Here was a whole chain of villainies out of which Our Candidate must extricate himself, and if possible, turn the consequences upon the heads of the inventors. Only a day remained in which to do it, and to its accomplishment he bent all his energies.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"LIGHT COMETH WITH THE MORNING."

The first concern of Our Candidate, much as he was pressed by matters pertaining to the political contest he was waging, was to inform Col. Toll of the whereabouts and the condition of his daughter. Amid the absorbing concerns of these last hours of the campaign this exhibition of Nor[illegible]'s interest in him came in a most unexpected form and with unquestionable force. As yet no word that had passed between them had been expressive of a feeling stronger than deep regard.

Our Candidate's course had always been to consider well every case in law and every project in business before committing himself to it, and when he entered upon any new undertaking it was with the fixed conviction in his mind that he could win. It was this conviction that led him to seek and accept the nomination for North Flat. He had directed the campaign in person, notwithstanding the accredited abilities of the local managers, and without seeming to take anything out of their hands or detract anything from their importance he had pulled his own strings with wonderful sagacity. But about this love affair there had been no mature deliberation. He had got into it he did not know how. In the manipulation of political plans and devices he had been so completely absorbed that the moments of relaxation given to companionship with Miss Toll did not seem to be a part of the real life he was living. That they had been to him more than some pleasing portions of hours which the body spent in rest and sleep while the brain took a holiday in undirected fancies about politics and a thousand other things, he could hardly realize. The events of last night were a revelation to him and they seemed to demand that he stop and think about a matter that in its serious form was entirely new to him. This was impossible at a moment when he had so little time to think of many things. How much indeed seemed to be pressing upon the next thirty-six hours. At the end of that brief period he would be either the successful or the defeated candidate in North Flat. To the ambitious man any contemplation of a step backward brings a sense of the horrible with it. To be defeated was to forfeit all his political ambition and retire into seclusion as far as politics were concerned. With him it was an article of faith that popularity could not be warmed over. If he succeeded? Oh,

well, success always takes care of itself. It is defeat that is to be dreaded.

Swanson's presence at the bridge puzzled Our Candidate. Nora's womanly instincts had prevented her from ever making reference to the attentions Swanson had paid her. He was quite as unaware that Pinkerton was impelled by stronger animosity than political feeling, and therefore could have no conception of plots deeper than political bitterness might engender. The private circular was intended to work upon the religious prejudices of his Catholic friends. If it had been successfully kept from all eyes and ears but theirs as it was intended to be, many of them would be led to mark their ballots against him on the morrow, while outwardly they had no need to manifest other than the utmost good will toward him. Even Col. Toll had been touched in a sensitive spot else he would never have signed the circular. Might not even he, though he had signed it only to prove his own sincerity, be justified in marking his ballot against the man who boasted that he had bought him? A letter that Our Candidate was believed to have written had been produced, and it would not be at all unreasonable if Col. Toll confronted him with this perfidy the moment they met. The burning of the Orange Hall was a plot to prevent the Monday night meeting and intensify the feeling of that society, already too strong, against the party of Our Candidate. Altogether the prospect looked dark for our side on the morning of the day preceding the polling in North Flat, so dark that the brightest sunshine that ever succeeded a September storm could not altogether dispel the gloom we felt. How many more plots of which we knew nothing might also be laid?

Swanson and his hired man at the Running Creek bridge, and with tools? They had not come to repair it. It was miles away from Swanson's home, and he could know nothing of its condition. It was evident then they were there to destroy it, and Nora's assertion, impossible as it had seemed at first, that he intended to drown Guilford, seemed really the only explanation.

Our Candidate had made no calculation for political animosities so strong as these, and it was in an incredulous spirit that he joined with the men of the house where Nora was lodged in an examination of the bridge. They found the two string-pieces of the structure sawn almost through and the stakes that stayed them on the shore drawn and then lightly replaced in the mud again so as to give the appearance of being twisted out of place by the moving timbers. The weight of a vehicle in the center of the bridge would have broken the unsawn fraction of

the string-pieces and the rude corduroy structure would have scattered itself in detached fragments along the bank of the swift-running stream.

Such a discovery was not calculated to tranquilize Our Candidate's mind. It did seem to increase the necessity of seeing Col. Toll as speedily as possible. "Prince" had gone from his moorings, and had probably found his way home only to add to the alarm of Nora's parents. We immediately set out for the next nearest bridge some miles away. To go by the way of "the Hollow" would give us information as to how the plot to burn the hall had succeeded, and thither we made our way as fast as the state of the roads would permit.

CHAPTER XXX.

SLEEPY HOLLOW WIDE AWAKE.

"Sleepy Hollow" was never more thoroughly awake than it was that morning. It was once the busiest center of trade in all Flat County. To it the farmers brought all their produce from many miles around, for it possessed the advantage of water communication with the outside world, and though it was not much of a stream to dignify with the name of "river," waterways are valuable where railways have not penetrated. Grain warehouses had been erected at "The Forks," large general stores were opened in the Hollow, and a busy little community of artisans found active contentment in providing for the growing wants of a rich agricultural district. But a great and established metropolis fifty miles away stretched out its arm in the shape of a railway and then it was as if the tentacle of an octopus had fastened upon "The Forks." It became a way-station, where people got on board to go to a larger market and where farmers discharged their loads of golden grain directly into the cars and received therefor checks payable in the city. The shops disposed of their stocks and never replenished them; the warehouses took on a dry rot from their foundations on the piles to their ridgepoles in the roof and were ready to topple into the stream on the slightest provocation from a summer zephyr. A blacksmith, a shoemaker and a tailor, each as wanting in energy to follow the train of departing business activity as they were to follow the changes

of fashion, remained and cobbled and mended for the few who remained with them. The little church that stood upon a picturesque knoll and was once the pride of the village in its coat of yellow paint and a tin-covered spire that glittered and scintillated in the sun, grew duller and duller without, as each succeeding preacher seemed to grow duller and duller within. If Goldsmith had wanted inspiration for his "Deserted Village" he could not have found a more fitting picture than this Auburn of North Flat, which now bore the typical nickname of "Sleepy Hollow."

But a village was never more thoroughly awake than was Sleepy Hollow when Our Candidate's carriage drove into it that morning. The people Nora had alarmed only reached the Hollow in time to give a hand in extinguishing the flames. The incendiaries had been and gone again and it was only by some good chance a villager abroad at that hour saw the blaze in its incipiency and gave the alarm. A three days' rain had made the structure too wet to burn readily and the fire had been put out with slight damage. The question which was agitating "The Hollow" when Our Candidate arrived was not the firing of the Orange Hall so much as the disappearance of Nora Toll, the loved and loveliest girl of North Flat.

When Col. Toll awoke from the bitter reverie in which that political trio composed of J. Jones Pinkerton, Johnson Wesley and another had left him, his thoughts turned to his daughter. Hers was the figure that always arose in his mind when he was troubled; hers the love that sustained his oft-tried faith in human kind. If all the world beside were false she could not be.

The light in her room had been put out. With a father's solicitude he paused at her door just to catch the assurance of her well-being from her calm and measured breathing.

But he did not hear it.

When he had pressed the door a little open he did not hear it.

He opened it wider.

Still no sound of breathing.

He stepped gently in.

What! Not there? The bed undisturbed? What did this mean?

He lighted a lamp and peered anxiously around the room, but it disclosed nothing except that his daughter was gone. Had she left any intimation of where she had gone? He went to the dressing table and ran his eye eagerly over its contents. There was a sealed letter; but it lay back upward and aside; not intended for immediate discovery, evidently. He picked it up and read:

MR. JOHN SWANSON,

MUGGINSVILLE,

ONT.

The address was in his daughter's handwriting, and knowing what had transpired between Nora and Swanson, he had no hesitation in opening it. With a quick nervous wrench he tore the delicate missive from its covering and read:

MR. JOHN SWANSON:

Sir—I have reconsidered the answer I gave you on the occasion of your recent visit, and am willing to accept your proposal in order to save my father's reputation. I hope I have not been too long considering the sacrifice.

HONORA TOLL.

"The silly girl! For my sake—the angel! She shall not marry him if I were to hang for it. Where can she be? Has she gone to him? Or has she repented the proffered sacrifice and fled from him?"

Thus questioning, he hastened to the room of Mrs. Toll and waking her told her what had happened. In the first moments of fear as to what might have befallen Nora she confessed all her knowledge of the letter; but it did not serve to enlighten them a bit as to the whereabouts of the girl. The few moments of speculation on what might have taken her away, the hasty search about the premises and into several of the most improbable places, the discovery that "Prince" was missing, all this action does not require to be set down in writing. For such occasions the pen and the type are too slow. The imagination cannot wait for them. When Our Candidate reached Sleepy Hollow Col. Toll was already there but too much overcome by his anxiety to join rationally in the search for his daughter. He had simply given the alarm as he came along and numbers were out on the search. The people to whom she had given the alarm about the Orange Hall incendiaries had reported all they knew. News had been brought in of the finding of "Prince." He was leisurely making his way home, as much depressed in spirits, it may be, as others about the absence of his affectionate mistress. But the finding of "Prince" without finding Miss Toll only tended to deepen the mystery, and the ingenuity of the Sleepy Hollow mind was actively at work as it had never been on any other occasion, devising the most diabolical probabilities as to the whereabouts of the missing girl.

If the daily press of the country had not been quite so actively engaged in partisan arguments for and against the support of

the Government at the polls on the morrow North Flat might have furnished the chief journalistic sensation of the day. But the mysterious disappearance was explained during the day, without scandal, and the incident was bereft of more than half its interest; so Miss Toll's plucky adventure went unrecounted in the public press. Her friends may have been too modest to sound her praise, and her enemies were too much chagrined at the exposure of their plots to talk much of the distinguished part she had played in the North Flat campaign.

But perhaps Our Candidate was in part to blame for this sudden indifference, for after proclaiming that Miss Toll was alive and in safety he stifled further inquiry by saying that she learned by chance of the unsafety of a bridge and knowing he would have to cross it that night had come to apprise him of it.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE INCENDIARY'S REVELATION.

If the morning light had revealed nothing but Pinkerton's conspiracy the Colonel would probably have received Our Candidate with indifference. If his daughter's whereabouts had still been in mystery he would have had little ear for anything else. But when they had retired to a room at the Metropolitan Hotel in Sleepy Hollow and Our Candidate had made him as fully acquainted as he was himself with the two other plots, all the old combativeness of the Colonel's nature returned and he was as eager as Our Candidate to turn to the best possible account for themselves these machinations of the enemy.

"The letter Pinkerton showed you was mine," said Our Candidate. "It was written to Chore in answer to one in which he in a humorous way referred to having bought some sheep from a Rover township man who was evidently pressed to meet his payments and whose good will we could gain by giving him a lift. I answered him in the same good nature. As to Father Innocent, I have in him nothing but the good will of a man of more liberal views than are common to his church. As for yourself, Colonel, you know better than I do why you are my friend in this contest, instead of being one of my strongest foes."

"Has my daughter ever told you," said the Colonel, with some apparent hesitation, "of John Swanson's disagreeable attentions, and of—well, of his threats as to what he would do if she did not marry him?"

"Not a word," said Our Candidate, with an expression of astonishment on his countenance that would have conveyed an answer in itself.

"Well, there is too long a story connected with it to tell it all now," said the Colonel. "But it is so, and when we have settled this question of to-morrow at the polls, I'll give it to you if you care to hear it. There was more than political feeling in that murderous plot at the bridge. But now we have not a moment to lose if we would turn these guns upon the men who have loaded them. I see Swanson is down here this morning, gaping with the greenest of them, in order no doubt to impress the people with his innocence. All we will have to do with him now is to send someone to tell him in vigorous language that he may escape arrest for his work of last night by going home and remaining on his own premises and keeping his hired man there until after the poll closes to-morrow night. He's a cowardly villain and he'll be off in five minutes, you will see, if that is said to him with the right emphasis," said the Colonel.

"That's what you would call 'killing two votes with one stone,'" said Our Candidate. "I'll find somebody to convey the interesting information to him."

"But before I go," continued Our Candidate, "What can we do about the hall burning? From Nora's description of the horses under the shed I am very certain they were hired from a Catchemtown livery stable, and the hotter the constables are on the trail the more likely they are to catch up with the incendiaries. Somebody will have to go to town at once for some printing, for we must have our circular, too, at the polls to-morrow morning, and we can have the constables at work before noon. We shall at least give some evidence of our innocence of the plot by putting the law in motion to find the guilty parties."

The facility with which news travels even in rural districts is a part of that common phenomenon at which people continue to wonder long after it has ceased to be strange. Although it was yet compartively early in the morning a good portion of North Flat seemed to have been apprised of the attempt to burn the Sleepy Hollow Orange Hall. Everybody who had gone out from the village and everybody who had passed through it seemed to have made themselves special couriers for the transmission of the news; and it was so very rare that anything transpired in The Hollow that everybody who heard the news seemed called upon to visit the spot and see for themselves. Men who would not have thought it worth while to go to the nearest polling booth and exercise the right of intelligent citizenship on the morrow

had their curiosity wonderfully stirred by this story of a fire in The Hollow and a girl's midnight ride to give the alarm.

While Col. Toll was out seeking an ambassador to Swanson and the junior counsel was gone in search of the Worthy Master of the Sleepy Hollow Lodge, who would accompany him to town and lay the charge of incendiarism, Our Candidate was deep in the throes of the composition of a circular that would throw consternation into the Pinkerton camp next morning, when there came a rap at the door and our young friend, Jim Bigson, responded to the invitation to "come in."

Jim was among those who had heard that Sleepy Hollow was for once wide-awake, and he had come to see how it looked with its eyes open, as well as to be present at the meeting in the evening. In the few minutes he had been in the village he had learned the story of the two men in the Mugginsville Hall who in their garrulous dialogue had exposed their business to Nora. He had also learned before leaving home that the two old drones of the Mugginsville hive, Sammy Brown and "Jimmy the Weaver," the same whom the junior counsel had seen chumming on the bench in the shadows of the Muggins House that afternoon when he left Our Candidate doing supposed missionary work at the Colonel's, were missing. Indeed, the landlord of the Muggins House was seriously exercised at the mysterious disappearance of these two worthies, who had become useful receptacles of whisky paid for by the travelers stopping to water their horses at "the Corners," and who did the chores of the premises for their board. They were a source of profit the loss of which concerned him. They had gone off Sunday morning without explaining their mission and had not turned up since. Jim Bigson put two and two together as soon as he learned the story of the two men overheard in Muggins' driving shed, and he had hunted up Our Candidate to tell him of his suspicions.

Jim's detective services were at once enlisted and he was about to join the Worthy Master of the L. O. L. in the trip to town when our friend Zeke Moore arrived on the scene with the startling intelligence that the leader of the Government, the most distinguished politician in the country, was coming to address the Sleepy Hollow meeting.

Incredible as the story was, and unreliable as was Zeke's information generally, it took a marvelously strong hold upon Our Candidate. The surprises of the past few hours had come so thick and fast that a man exhausted by the labors of a long and arduous campaign, irregular living and much loss of sleep, was prepared to see the darkest side of every portentous cloud.

His faith in the rumor was immovable, and he at once set to work to prepare himself for the new emergency. The prospect of having to meet and answer a speech from the Prime Minister would have disturbed stronger nerves than those of the prospective member for North Flat, and he felt the need of moral support for the evening engagement. The Sleepy Hollow telegraph office never knew such a day's business since the line had come to town. Every chairman of polling sub-divisions who could be reached was apprised of the news and ordered to bring his association *en masse* to the meeting. Dr. Goliath was requested to be on hand; and the traveling show of hands was called out. There was electricity in the announcement itself. Sir John to visit Sleepy Hollow? Had the universe got off its axis there could scarcely have been more commotion in the little hamlet. It was now plain, so it seemed to our side, why the Orangemen had refused to let their hall for anything but a joint-meeting and it was more plain than ever where the charge was to lie if the hall had been destroyed. It would be called an attempt to prevent Sir John being heard.

It was with such reflections as these that Our Candidate was compelled to pass the day in Sleepy Hollow, a nest of sectarian bigotries, a stagnant pool that gendered only conservative affinities.

The first ray of light and hope that came to him was a telegram announcing the arrest of the incendiaries. Jim Bigson had surmised correctly. The Catchemtown livery keeper had let two horses on Sunday to such men as Jim described and after a little search they were found in a groggery of the town, evidently enjoying in a big spree the reward of the labor they had so indifferently performed.

When they were put under arrest Jimmy put on a defiant front, but Sammy showed signs of early weakening. They were locked up apart and an effort made to get a confession from them. Although they admitted having engaged the horses all the evidence beyond that was purely circumstantial, and Jimmy stood upon the officer's assurance that he need not say anything that would criminate himself. Not even the intimation that their conversation in Muggins' Hall had been overheard moved him. But Sammy was more vulnerable, and under the impression that the punishment would fall more lightly on the man who made a confession, he made a clean breast of it. He claimed, however, that he had only been an accomplice; that Jimmy had anteed-up with him for the sake of company, but the original bargain had been made privately between Jimmy and Josh [illegible]kerton. What the prin-

cipal's consideration was he could not say, but he had got $10, and the understanding was that the burning must take place on the night before the meeting.

The next move was to get the deposition officially taken and use the incrimination of Pinkerton, taken from the court records, at the meeting that night. The faintest suspicion that Pinkerton was personally at the head of the plot for firing the Orange Hall was a vein of gold for our party, and they determined to follow it up with political avidity. As yet there was no knowledge that any stronger motive than that of political animosity impelled him, and among Our Candidate's allies there was no thought or disposition to look deeper than that. To show even the probability of his being guilty of such a resort just on the eve of the polling, when the time was too short for investigation or palliation seemed a special interposition for the good of the Liberal cause in North Flat, and it was not to be wondered at if the nature of Sammy Brown's confession spread faster than the best wisdom would have dictated. The result was that the local justice of the peace learned that Pinkerton's name was involved and with that partisan spirit which pervaded everything just at this time he persisted in remanding the prisoners until after election day.

Armed with the verbal indictment, however, the prospects were fair for a grand rout of the enemy that night at Sleepy Hollow, and many of the loudest political spirits of Catchemtown went out to see the fun.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE TUG OF WAR.

It was not yet sunset on that memorable day in North Flat when the "free and independent" from all points of the compass began to gather in "The Hollow." It was a wonderfully interesting picture viewed from the hilltop, that gathering of people in the enjoyment of full liberty to approve or condemn any of the measures by which they were governed; each possessed of equal right to mold and fashion the institutions of the state; none under any political bondage but the limitations of their own intelligence.

The capacity for free government is the best measure of a people's intelligence. As in the individual, mental capacity is often buried beneath the dull, inert matter of the physical nature, and is only

stirred by extraordinary conditions, so in the mass it is often buried beneath the dead and decaying materials of effete communities, and this extraordinary manifestation of political activity in Sleepy Hollow was as striking as it was uncommon.

The setting sun was sending his rays down into the valley to shimmer on the surface of the stagnant little river, and to turn to flaming red the reflections on the little old-fashioned window panes of the paintless houses, but it was yet light enough to show the groups of animated figures scattered here and there upon the main street leading through the village and to make quite distinct the wagon loads of people and the single individuals on horseback or afoot that straggled in over the hilltops and raised a shout for their respective candidates as they caught sight of the gathering in the valley below.

Arrived in the "Hollow," they generally pushed steadily on past every knot of voluble disputants until they reached the door of one or other of the three licensed liquor dispensaries of the village; for despite the decay of every other commercial enterprise, the "Hollow" still supported three so-called hotels. At this period, when temperance advocates were active in pressing for prohibitory legislation, and Governments were trading upon their power to grant licenses, hotel keepers were outwardly very neutral in political affairs, but there was nevertheless a pretty general understanding among the knowing ones of both parties that they could tell the political tendencies of a wagon load by the tavern it stopped at.

It had been evident at an early hour of the day that what our friends originally intended should be a comparatively quiet and unadvertised meeting for urging our views upon some of the more amenable hard-shells of the river bottom, would turn out to be the greatest meeting of the campaign. It would have been impossible to keep our intention of holding a meeting entirely a secret, and so, with a profession of magnanimity and a show of confidence in our enemies that we did not at all entertain, we had agreed to hold a joint meeting in the hall of the Orange Order. But our assumption of virtue did not go the length of preventing us from arranging that the news of the meeting should come to the ears of sufficient of our friends to make the gathering a liberal balance against the natural Tory predominance of the "Hollow."

Our opponents were not much astray, therefore, when they anticipated such an emergency and sent out a private and confidential whisper to their friends that Sir John was going to be present, and if they wanted a big treat they should be on hand.

But their secret had not kept any better than ours, and how it affected the following of both parties can be judged from the description just given of the animated scene in Sleepy Hollow the night before election day.

With varying degrees of anxiety, from Our Candidate down to the most phlegmatic elector in North Flat, the assembled crowds stood waiting and watching each conveyance that drove into the "Hollow." Our opponents were virtually in control of the hall, although the meeting had been called by Our Candidate, and they turned this to their own advantage by upon one pretext and another keeping back our supporters when the door opened and packing the house with their friends.

The limited capacity of the building was strained soon after the doors were opened, and a noisy and perspiring crowd occupying every seat, fretted and fumed because the speakers did not come forward. At last, in the growing darkness, there came noisily over the hilltop what seemed to be a whole train of vehicles laden with re-enforcements for the meeting. The cry went up:

"Here he comes!"

Our hearts sank within us at the contemplation of such an addition to the oratorical and numerical strength of the enemy. Could it be possible that Sir John was coming to "Sleepy Hollow," and escorted, too, by a train of his admiring followers from Catchemtown? The excitement drew a few whose curiosity was unsubduable from the hall, but the majority held their seats with patriotic devotion to their party and a pronounced objection to having to listen to several hours' speechmaking standing upon their feet.

As the train of vehicles drew nearer a change came over the demonstrative crowd that had scattered itself the whole length of the village street. There was less of shouting, and more of eager interrogation passed along the line, betokening some uncertainty.

As the procession drew nearer, it appeared to be led by that materialized nightmare of staid and respectable North Flat Conservatives, Doctor Goliath's "Traveling Show of Hands."

That was what it proved to be when it drew up in front of the Bee Hive Hotel, and the Doctor himself stepped upon the high seat of the driver and led in three rousing cheers for Our Candidate.

Then our opponents' joy was turned into mourning, while the blood in our veins coursed back again to all its accustomed centers. Our Candidate felt better, and when the new arrivals had adjourned to the bar-room and taken a drink (the bottle in the wagon having been exhausted some distance back on the road),

they did not care much though the arch-leader of the Tories, Sir John himself, should appear on the scene.

But the great Conservative statesman never came. The honorable distinction to be given to Sleepy Hollow had its bounds. Still the ruse had worked well, and the "Hollow" people revelled in the great renown of having the largest meeting of that campaign in North Flat.

About this time the opinion was expressed that the hall was altogether too small for the numbers present, and it was decided to hold the meeting out of doors. A heavy lumber wagon was drawn upon the platform of the village weigh-scales, planks were laid across the wagon-box and a large barn lantern was suspended upon a pole at a goodly distance above the speakers' heads.

About this time also the perspiring crowd that had been holding the hall for two weary hours in the interests of free speech and party principles, discovered that preparations were making for a meeting in the open air. They were not in amiable mood when they filed out. A warm climate always disposes to wickedness—the theological basis of eternal punishment—and it was simply a question of what form it would take in this case.

A man with a bad impediment in his speech was chosen to introduce the speakers. The explanation was that he was a prominent citizen of the "Hollow," and in the trite phraseology of the political ring, "straddle the fence" in his views. He was likely to mark his ballot for those who gratified his love of preferment, and Our Candidate moved that he take the chair.

He proceeded after due formalities to take the wagon, where as many of the leaders as could well be accommodated had already climbed. The orators of the night had got out their blue books and clippings and glanced forebodingly at the suspended barn-lantern that was doing its best, with the aid of a clouded moon, to illuminate all outdoors. The crowd had drawn closer and closer about the platform, and now the chairman, somewhat nervous in his exalted office, rose and said:

"G-Ge-Gen-Gentlemen and F-F-Fel-Fello 'Lectors of North F-F-Flat,—I f-f-feel greatly—"

By this time some of the late occupants of the heated hall had gently raised the tongue of the wagon, and just at this juncture they jerked it with a suddenness that threw the speaker and those with him on the wagon off their feet, and sent several of them to the ground.

Then began a struggle for the possession of the wagon, out of which grew a couple of personal encounters. The large majority

were favorable to the orderly proceeding of the meeting, and by these the wagon was taken back to its place. But instead of placing it on the platform again, it was left on the road, and cross-stakes were driven through the wheels into the mud to hold it fast. Then the meeting resumed. The hour was now late, and all formalities were dispensed with. Our Candidate had the platform. He had improved wonderfully in the rough-and-ready requisites of a stump speaker since that day when he took the platform at the nominating convention and thanked them with courtly grace for choosing him as the Liberal standard-bearer. The vulgar phraseology and rough-hewn oratory that took any cut to a climax and applause, had both nettled and amused him, and he had learned in some measure to adapt himself to the capacities of his audience. But he never descended to what was coarse or rude, and by this means he continued to hold the respect of many of his most conservative opponents, who embodied about all of the early stock of British blue-blood that had not been lost in the course of its transmission to new soil, and which respected the refinements of the mother tongue the more where it had survived its crude surroundings.

He was followed by the other Candidate, his very antithesis in those characteristics just described. A back-township campaign manipulator, he had secured the nomination by sheer assurance, and he appeared at his very worst when he essayed public speaking. After some stereotyped phrases of introduction he sank at once to his natural level, from which neither the coolness of the better element of his own party nor the jeers of the worst element of ours could raise him. The greater the efforts made to practice the better forms of speech and the quiet dignity of Our Candidate the more painfully apparent became the diversity of the two men. That intuition with which an audience quickly measures up a speaker had drawn its gauge, and the ruder spirits began at once to treat with the contempt of familiarity the man who had no capabilities above themselves, except a capacity for sharp practice in the tricks of a campaign. Even J Jones Pinkerton, who was on the platform with him, and who was much depressed by the signal failure of his schemes of the previous night, felt more keenly than he had ever done the inferiority of the man who had worked himself into the party's candidacy. It was by no means his admiration for this man, nor altogether his devotion to party that had impelled him to such infamous devices to defeat the enemy in this campaign. It was the personal hate and grudge he had laid up against Our Candidate, who had unconsciously come between him and Nora Toll. He was even less pleased

when his Candidate, incapable of discussing questions of government, undertook to defend Pinkerton's character against the charge of attempted incendiarism. This report so freely circulated privately, Our Candidate had, with what now seemed great magnanimity, ignored; but a reference to it by Pinkerton's Candidate gave to the Doctor, who was to come after him, and who had been especially delegated to deal with that matter in the way it deserved, the very opportunity he had longed for.

The standing audience, that had shrunk or swollen in proportion to the numbers that from time to time oscillated between the village bar-rooms and the speakers' wagon, had become both drunken and tired, and it required something of a local and personal nature, such as the attempt to burn the Orange Hall, to interest them now in the speaking.

From the friendly staking of a few dollars or the betting of a new hat on the results of to-morrow's polling the babel rose to almost the proportions of a riot. Interruptions were frequent, and between these and the appeals of the chairman for order, much of the forty-five minutes allotted the other Candidate was being taken up. It was plain that the speaker then on the floor had put his foot in it, and as he had long since said all he had to say on the issues of the campaign his best friends were anxious to see him sit down.

The Doctor was received with a commingled storm of cheers, yells and groans, in which anything he attempted to say was entirely lost. But he was an adept at brow-beating a rough meeting, had great nerve and plenty of physical endurance, and might have been heard to say to one of his backers as he stepped forward: "Here goes for a two hours' talk if you want it."

The clamor by this time had grown to proportions that would have made pandemonium blush for its quietude. But he planted his heels firmly on the boards, drew out his watch, and announced that he was going to say what he had to say if he had to hold the floor all night.

"Sit down!" shouted somebody in the crowd.

"I won't sit down!" shouted the Doctor.

"Shut up!" said the crowd.

"I won't shut up!" responded the Doctor.

"Well, go ahead then!"

And he went ahead, though amid interruptions coming thick and fast. But he worried the enemy and then abused them, until most of the sensible and sober remnant left the ground in disgust. Another detachment was drawn off to see a personal encounter in one of the bar-rooms, and then he invited his friends who re-

mained to adjourn with him to the hall to complete some arrangement of committees for the morrow.

This was a shameful abuse of privilege, but it succeeded; the most frantic appeals and denunciations from Pinkerton, who was next to have had the floor, did not avail to keep the gathering at that late hour from breaking up.

While the peaceable and orderly citizen of North Flat, who had come many miles to hear a fair and dispassionate statement of public questions, climbed into their wagons and turned homeward, musing on the low tone of their country's politics and vowing that they would take no part in them in future, the managers and runners of the party machine went not to their unvirtuous couches, but scattered themselves over the Riding, each to watch the other's schemes for bulldozing and mesmerizing the pliable elector, and to do a little of it in their own behalf.

The more adolescent portions of the Traveling Show of Hands took to their wagon again and drove out of the "Hollow" chanting in chorus:

"The traitor's hand is on thy throat,
Ontario, Ontario!
Strike down that traitor with thy vote,
Ontario, Ontario!
Avenge this outrage on the right,
Stand forth with helmet flashing bright,
'Tis for thy liberties we fight,
Ontario, Ontario!
'Tis for thy liberties we fight,
Ontario, Ontario!"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE TRIUMPH.

Not until that momentous occasion when the Angel Gabriel is expected to appear, one foot upon the land and the other on the sea, and with a blast of his trumpet summons the world to judgment, will there be a time when so many people are exercised about the same matter as upon the morning of a general election in a great country where representative government in truth and in fact prevails.

The people of North Flat were on the whole what is called an intelligent people and their interest in the affairs of government would compare favorably with any rural constituency in the country. The interest in this campaign had grown steadily since the opening of it. How much of this interest was due to the interesting relations which were supposed to exist between the Liberal candidate and the pretty and intelligent daughter of Col. Toll, it would be difficult to tell. It had certainly added its quota indirectly to the discussion of politics among the women folk of North Flat, and he was a lonely man indeed who had neither wife, nor sweetheart, nor feminine friend who could induce him to take sides for or against "Nora Toll's fellow." These feminine influences might be cast on the side of generous admiration for the city lawyer, who, young, clever, handsome and wealthy, did not think himself too good to pay court to a country girl; or they might take sides with the spirit of envious disparagement that loves to belittle another's good fortune; for good fortune it is always thought to make what the world calls "a good match."

But whatever the strength of these forces may have been, they were all awake on the morning of election and the contagion of excitement had spread from the heads of the household and the young people even to the children. School boys on the roadside loitered and hurrahed for the candidate their fathers favored; while school girls wore a rueful face that morning as they realized that they had been born girls and could never have a vote; the women paused from their morning work to count the wagon loads of voters that passed and wonder how each wagon load was going to vote; the men who declared they were "too busy to take any interest in politics" stopped their horses in the furrows and leaned on the fence to ask a passing wagon-load "how they thought the thing was going!"

The organization for "getting out the vote" had been very complete on both sides and the party managers of every polling sub-division had a wagon load or more of voters ready to march in at the opening of the poll. With so many safeguards as the Canadian election law throws around the elector and the ballot-box there is little opportunity for embarrassing the voter or changing his intentions after he has reached the polling-booth. To spring upon him some unexpected issue affecting his personal or religious prejudices at a moment when he had not the time nor the opportunity to weigh the statements, and then to accompany them with an air of important secrecy, was perhaps the most effective scheme that could have been devised to demoralize our Catholic friends, and it was more than worthy the accredited shrewdness of Pinkerton. Conscious, as our managers were, that no such rumor as his circular alleged was common in the county, they had made no allusion to it at the meeting the night before, and the originator was left to felicitate himself on the thought that at least one of his plans had not miscarried. It was therefore interesting to observe the surprise that Pinkerton and those in the plot with him experienced when they found posted freely about the polling-booths that morning, on very conspicuous bills, the following:

NOTICE.

To the Catholic Electors of North Flat:

You are hereby warned against the false statements contained in a circular which will be privately placed in your hands at the polls to-day. The signatures thereto were obtained by false representations, and their private circulation at this hour in the campaign is designedly with the view of preventing their public contradiction with proof before the vote is cast.

The poster was without signature, for any that could have been obtained in the brief period after the plot had come to the knowledge of Our Candidate would only have awakened prejudice. The one advantage therefore that it had over the circular of J. Jones Pinkerton was its open and public character.

During the lull of the afternoon when votes were coming in slowly, and the division officers were relieving one another from attendance within the polling place, it was quite in order to while away the time by telling stories of this and former campaigns in which the company had participated. Whisky had always been a potent influence in a campaign, particularly when it could be applied on election day or the night previous, and the practice of "sitting up" with a doubtful voter to prevent the other party

getting hold of him and plying him with drinks during the night was not uncommon.

"Did you hear about Zeke Moore's self-sacrificing labors last night?" said an adherent of our side.

We had not.

"Well, at the close of the meeting in the Hollow last night, Zeke heard us talk about 'sitting up' with some fellows over in the 'Marsh,' and he declared his intention to go over and 'sit up' with some of those mild-mannered chaps in Martyrville who 'he knew would be bought up or mesmerized if they weren't watched.' One of the boys who had heard Zeke's loud announcement watched him, and dropped in a little after midnight to find him enjoying a glass of beer and a pipe with one of the staunchest Grits in Martyrville.

"He declared that there was a great deal of mischief in the wind. He had passed three men in a rig on the third concession with their coat collars turned up and their hats pulled over their eyes, going down toward Winkville, and 'he knew they were Tories because he heard two stone jugs rattle in the wagon-box,' and he thought he recognized that scalawag Larry Larkin as the driver."

While we were enjoying a laugh at this characteristic story of Zeke's imaginative faculty a team dashed up to the polling booth and another doubtful voter who had been unearthed at the last moment was rushed in to cast his ballot.

The scrutineers on both sides had kept up a pretty close speculative tally of the vote as it had been cast and knew that the difference was very small in our division. Desperate efforts were therefore making by both sides to get in an additional vote or two.

The man now brought up was not down on our list, and being in the hands of friends of the other candidate it was evident he would vote against us if he voted at all.

"Here, let this man vote," cried the runner, thrusting his man into the room where the ballots were deposited.

"No vote in this division," protested the scrutineer.

"But he has been acting as scrutineer in No. 10, and he has the returning officer's certificate."

"Then he ought to have voted in No. 10."

"But he thought he could make his own division in time and now sees that he cannot."

"Better go back to No. 10 then."

"But he can't make that either now."

"Mr. Deputy Returning Officer, I protest against this man's

voting here," said the scrutineer. "It is evident the man has no legitimate vote anywhere. The ruse won't work."

Exasperated at being beaten, they still make a show of sincerity by rushing back to their conveyance and driving off like Jehu in the direction of the polling booth where it is claimed the fellow is registered, leaving behind them a string of imprecations and unprescribed oaths.

The next polling sub-division was reached and the same trick tried there, but while our friends disputed with him as to which of the prescribed oaths should be taken in such a case, time was called and the poll closed.

Then, everybody interested in the result who could do so, turned his steps toward Catchemtown, the headquarters to which all returns were to be sent as soon as the count was made.

Among the many deeply interested ones who had to wait impatiently at home, there were none more anxious than Nora Toll, who was still suffering from her midnight adventure and confined to the house. With how much interest she waited nobody but herself realized.

The nervous tension of the hours that intervene between the closing of the poll and the receipt of the last returns which tell the story of success or defeat is tremendous. Then it is that everybody thinks everybody else the most snail-paced in the world. The tardiness of the telegraph is universally condemned and everybody wonders why we do not go back to the days of stage-coaches and foot-postmen.

Our Candidate was probably as composed as the average candidate all over the country is at that hour. He proposed to take the matter philosophically. "The fight is over," he said by way of pacification of the excited roomful of people who were dogging him with inquiries, "and our anxiety can't make or mar a vote now; we may as well take it cool."

At the same time he was without anything but anxiety, as was evidenced by the eagerness with which he opened every dispatch, read it, and then handed to some one of his nearest lieutenants to read to the crowd. The reports of gains and losses in the cities, where the totals are made up quickly, fell indifferently on his ears. What he wanted to know was how the vote had gone in North Flat; if the township of Africa had stood its ground; if the Rover Swamp crowd had been mesmerized; if the emissaries of the Government had corrupted the free and independent in "Satanville;" and whether the gerrymandered township of Tupper had gone heavily against him.

The reports came in just in that order calculated to tantalize

everybody. The most important points were the last to be heard from. Those that gave large and certain majorities one way or the other soon had their reports in. The unreliable and equivocal neighborhoods were slow and piece-meal in their reports.

Catchemtown itself had gone within one or two of what was expected of it. Sleepy Hollow, the hot-bed of Toryism, had materially reduced its Tory majority, and our committee room was light and cheerful, while clouds and quietness settled over the Tory rendezvous across the street.

Then came a report from one division of Brown township which was far below our expectations, and from some unknown source the rumor quickly passed around that the enemy had been in Brown township last night with hatfuls of money and the whole township had gone to smash. Then our light was out, and there was a corresponding revival of cheerfulness across the way.

But as other divisions of Brown were heard from it was found on the whole to have sustained its old record for fidelity to Grit principles.

And then the returns from old Standfast township came in showing the biggest Grit majority ever polled there. Then the hip-hip-hurrah! that floated out of the committee room windows carried terror to the camp of the Canaanites over the way.

But the unreliable "Marsh" neighborhood had evidently been tampered with. After all our watchfulness the moral bottom had been knocked out of it, and it rolled up a big majority for the other candidate. This threw a coolness over our side of the street and discouraged the boys who were ready to put the match to their cotton wick torches. The doleful news was carried to the Traveling Show of Hands, that, in company with the Tootville Brass Band, was waiting on the border of the town until the returns would warrant their triumphal entry, or compel them to turn sadly away into the next Riding, where the Grits had been "hived" and a victory for our side was sure to need celebrating.

This unexpected result in the Marsh district was a damper which served to relieve the pressure of undue jubilance on our side of the street.

The next report was from Satanville, and that neighborhood of uncertain affiliations was found to have done actually better than our estimate. Then we rejoiced again. But only until Africa was heard from, which put us under a cloud, while it revived a ray of hope in the Tory bosom. The returns from Egypt were the next to come in, and they reduced our majority so rapidly and so materially that the fate of the two candidates now turned on the amount of the Tory majority in the distant township of Tupper.

The uncertainty was torturing, the excitement was too intense for expression.

In the Catchemtown telegraph office the pressure had become so great that it was necessary to lock the doors to keep out the impatient and excited crowd, so that the instrument might be heard.

Amongst those who managed to get locked indoors was the junior counsel. Among his accomplishments was a knowledge of telegraphy, and it now served him a good turn. The office was in the hands of the postmaster, a federal office-holder and an opponent of Our Candidate. The wires were busy with messages from all parts of the country, and it was easy, where the operators were so disposed, to hold back unfavorable news. Such messages as they wished to make public were posted on the lighted window. The enemy in Tupperville knew that the township had gone against them, and having learned the returns from the rest of the riding, they conceived the idea of keeping back their report until the night was too far advanced for our friends to celebrate their victory. This scheme was consummated over the wires, and the J. C. listening caught the tenor of it.

He immediately wrote a message to the Doctor, telling him what was being done and advising that they proceed with their celebration at once. Attracting the attention of one of our friends outside, he pushed the message to him through the opening in the night letter box, and a few minutes served to make its nature understood outside.

Our Candidate's warning not to hurrah before they are out of the woods is lost in the growing acclaim. The pent-up impatience has broken all bounds. They press forward and taking him up bodily they place him on the shoulders of two of his most able-bodied supporters; the torches are already lighted, the Traveling Show of Hands and the Tootville Brass Band has arrived; a procession is formed and headed for the town park, where a bonfire is already blazing, for the small boys of both parties have all come over to our side and have added their tar-barrels and their uproar to the rejoicing of the victors. There is nothing so forgiving as the average small boy before his prejudices are fixed, and fun is a higher consideration than fame.

The last light in the enemy's headquarters has gone out and most of the tired and vanquished warriors of a hard-fought campaign have gone home to bury themselves out of hearing of the din that proclaims their defeat.

A few, who bear disappointment with a better grace, perhaps because they are less earnest in the fight, follow the crowd and

listen to the speeches of self-gratulation indulged in by the victorious party.

Once more a wagon—the long wagon of the Traveling Show of Hands—does duty for a platform, and Our Candidate is called on for a speech.

At this moment a telegraph messenger boy is found struggling to make his way through the crowd to the wagon. He has a message for Our Candidate. The enemy has decided to do the graceful thing. It brings full returns from Tupper township, and it shows a great revulsion of political sentiment in the gerrymandered township. An intelligent constituency has condemned an unstatesmanlike artifice, and OUR CANDIDATE is the member for North Flat by a majority of 100.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE SECRET OUT.

The reaction that follows the nervous strain of a general election campaign is depressing and all pervading. It might be expected that those who win would want to talk about it. But they don't. They seem to have concentrated all their remaining energy upon two or three hours of cheering and crowing as soon as the returns are in. After that the body politic lapses into a comatose condition, from which it gradually awakens in the course of a week or ten days.

That Our Candidate found vitality enough to pursue his attentions to Miss Toll is only another evidence of the energizing influences of the tender passion. What he said to her was mutually satisfactory, and when they came to tell the Colonel, he took them in his arms; and into his confidence also, regarding a matter they had both been curious to learn about.

"Twenty years ago or thereabouts," said the Colonel, "the people of Flat County did me the honor to make me Treasurer of the county. I was young and enthusiastic and I threw myself into everything that interested me with the same energy that I gave to the clearing of my bush farm. I was pronounced and partisan in my politics and prepared to risk anything for the success of the cause I espoused, and those who knew that took advantage of it. The county was thinly settled and poor, and dollars were not less potent then than they have always been in a political campaign. The most popular man in our party was a

man without means, and I was induced to take the funds of the county to further his election. Our party was sure to be successful at the polls they said, and the money would be returned without the county being a bit the wiser or a bit the poorer.

"Well, our expectations were not realized. 'Our Candidate' was defeated; and the men who devised and urged the dishonest act were as poor as I. To trouble them or trust to their ingenuity for meeting my loss was only to run great risk of exposure, and before the time for auditing the books came around I had confided to John Swanson the position I was in, had borrowed the money of him and mortgaged my farm to secure its payment. Though the party came into power later on, I have refused to receive a dollar or an appointment at their hands. I paid John Swanson the sum I borrowed, with interest, and I was completely free to join hands with you in this campaign.

"Now, if it seems well to you two young people that I should be more to you than a political supporter you have my blessing, and I promise to do what I can to secure Mrs. Toll's vote and influence in favor of the new ticket."

"Well, since you gave in and voted to suit me the last time," said Mrs. Toll, who had been listening unobserved by the Colonel, to his recital of that humiliating mistake of an otherwise sterling life and character, "I'll give in to you this time."

"Then that gives you a good working majority, Guilford," said the Colonel.

"That makes the meeting unanimous," said our Candidate, as he placed his arm around Nora's waist and declared the motion carried with a kiss.

Another campaign has been fought since Our Candidate entered political life, and his consistent course in Parliament has been endorsed by his constituents with a largely increased majority. The Local Member has risen to a place in the cabinet, and the Traveling Show of Hands is particularly proud of him. Jim Bigson has served an apprenticeship to public life as a member of the municipal council of North Flat, and is the coming man for the Local Legislature in one of the Electoral Districts of Flat County. It is occasion for regret that I can not report any change for the better in the circumstances of J. Jones Pinkerton. His professional shingle still adorns an office door in Catchemtown, the selfish interests of party having failed as yet to find any place better suited to his peculiar talents. Zeke Moore is still the credulous soul he always was, and the active harbinger of rumors bad and good in the county of Flat. John Swanson went into retirement on suggestions made to him the day of the Sleepy

Hollow meeting, and his interest in politics has never revived. He probably considers that he and the Colonel are even now and they will keep one another's secrets until they both go over to the great majority.

Nora, as the happy wife of the Member for North Flat, has taken a Liberal view of religion as well as politics, and by her marriage with a Liberal Protestant has added one more link to the chain that will yet bind all sects in the one grand brotherhood of Christianity. But in spite of all the materialism of her age she still has respect to that unexplained influence which led her mother, in spite of moral rectitude, to intercept her letter to John Swanson, and saved her the humiliation of offering herself to him in marriage.