

The Gilded Age, Part 5.

Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens) and Charles Dudley Warner

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THE GILDED AGE

A Tale of Today

by Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner

1873

Part 5.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

That Chairman was nowhere in sight. Such disappointments seldom occur in novels, but are always happening in real life.

She was obliged to make a new plan. She sent him a note, and asked him

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to call in the evening--which he did.

She received the Hon. Mr. Buckstone with a sunny smile, and said:

"I don't know how I ever dared to send you a note, Mr. Buckstone, for you have the reputation of not being very partial to our sex."

"Why I am sure my reputation does me wrong, then, Miss Hawkins. I have been married once--is that nothing in my favor?"

"Oh, yes--that is, it may be and it may not be. If you have known what perfection is in woman, it is fair to argue that inferiority cannot interest you now."

"Even if that were the case it could not affect you, Miss Hawkins," said the chairman gallantly. "Fame does not place you in the list of ladies who rank below perfection." This happy speech delighted Mr. Buckstone as much as it seemed to delight Laura. But it did not confuse him as much as it apparently did her.

"I wish in all sincerity that I could be worthy of such a felicitous compliment as that. But I am a woman, and so I am gratified for it just as it is, and would not have it altered."

"But it is not merely a compliment--that is, an empty complement--it is the truth. All men will endorse that."

Laura looked pleased, and said:

"It is very kind of you to say it. It is a distinction indeed, for a country-bred girl like me to be so spoken of by people of brains and culture. You are so kind that I know you will pardon my putting you to the trouble to come this evening."

"Indeed it was no trouble. It was a pleasure. I am alone in the world since I lost my wife, and I often long for the society of your sex, Miss Hawkins, notwithstanding what people may say to the contrary."

"It is pleasant to hear you say that. I am sure it must be so. If I feel lonely at times, because of my exile from old friends, although surrounded by new ones who are already very dear to me, how much more lonely must you feel, bereft as you are, and with no wholesome relief from the cares of state that weigh you down. For your own sake, as well as for the sake of others, you ought to go into society oftener. I seldom see you at a reception, and when I do you do not usually give me very much of your attention"

"I never imagined that you wished it or I would have been very glad to make myself happy in that way.--But one seldom gets an opportunity to say more than a sentence to you in a place like that. You are always the centre of a group--a fact which you may have noticed yourself. But if one might come here--"

"Indeed you would always find a hearty welcome, Mr. Buckstone. I have often wished you would come and tell me more about Cairo and the Pyramids, as you once promised me you would."

"Why, do you remember that yet, Miss Hawkins? I thought ladies' memories were more fickle than that."

"Oh, they are not so fickle as gentlemen's promises. And besides, if I had been inclined to forget, I--did you not give me something by way of a remembrancer?"

"Did I?"

"Think."

"It does seem to me that I did; but I have forgotten what it was now."

"Never, never call a lady's memory fickle again! Do you recognize this?"

"A little spray of box! I am beaten--I surrender. But have you kept that all this time?"

Laura's confusion was very, pretty. She tried to hide it, but the more she tried the more manifest it became and withal the more captivating to look upon. Presently she threw the spray of box from her with an annoyed air, and said:

"I forgot myself. I have been very foolish. I beg that you will forget this absurd thing."

Mr. Buckstone picked up the spray, and sitting down by Laura's side on the sofa, said:

"Please let me keep it, Miss Hawkins. I set a very high value upon it now."

"Give it to me, Mr. Buckstone, and do not speak so. I have been sufficiently punished for my thoughtlessness. You cannot take pleasure in adding to my distress. Please give it to me."

"Indeed I do not wish to distress you. But do not consider the matter so gravely; you have done yourself no wrong. You probably forgot that you had it; but if you had given it to me I would have kept it--and not forgotten it."

"Do not talk so, Mr. Buckstone. Give it to me, please, and forget the matter."

"It would not be kind to refuse, since it troubles you so, and so I restore it. But if you would give me part of it and keep the rest--"

"So that you might have something to remind you of me when you wished to laugh at my foolishness?"

"Oh, by no means, no! Simply that I might remember that I had once assisted to discomfort you, and be reminded to do so no more."

Laura looked up, and scanned his face a moment. She was about to break the twig, but she hesitated and said:

"If I were sure that you--" She threw the spray away, and continued: "This is silly! We will change the subject. No, do not insist--I must have my way in this."

Then Mr. Buckstone drew off his forces and proceeded to make a wily

advance upon the fortress under cover of carefully--contrived artifices and stratagems of war. But he contended with an alert and suspicious enemy; and so at the end of two hours it was manifest to him that he had made but little progress. Still, he had made some; he was sure of that.

Laura sat alone and communed with herself;

"He is fairly hooked, poor thing. I can play him at my leisure and land him when I choose. He was all ready to be caught, days and days ago --I saw that, very well. He will vote for our bill--no fear about that; and moreover he will work for it, too, before I am done with him. If he had a woman's eyes he would have noticed that the spray of box had grown three inches since he first gave it to me, but a man never sees anything and never suspects. If I had shown him a whole bush he would have thought it was the same. Well, it is a good night's work: the committee is safe. But this is a desperate game I am playing in these days --a wearing, sordid, heartless game. If I lose, I lose everything--even myself. And if I win the game, will it be worth its cost after all? I do not know. Sometimes I doubt. Sometimes I half wish I had not begun. But no matter; I have begun, and I will never turn back; never while I live."

Mr. Buckstone indulged in a reverie as he walked homeward:

"She is shrewd and deep, and plays her cards with considerable discretion--but she will lose, for all that. There is no hurry; I shall come out winner, all in good time. She is the most beautiful woman in the world; and she surpassed herself to-night. I suppose I must vote for that bill, in the end maybe; but that is not a matter of much consequence the government can stand it. She is bent on capturing me, that is plain; but she will find by and by that what she took for a sleeping garrison was an ambuscade."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Now this surprising news caus'd her fall in 'a trance,
Life as she were dead, no limbs she could advance,
Then her dear brother came, her from the ground he took
And she spake up and said, O my poor heart is broke.

The Barnardcastle Tragedy.

"Don't you think he is distinguished looking?"

"What! That gawky looking person, with Miss Hawkins?"

"There. He's just speaking to Mrs. Schoonmaker. Such high-bred negligence and unconsciousness. Nothing studied. See his fine eyes."

"Very. They are moving this way now. Maybe he is coming here. But he looks as helpless as a rag baby. Who is he, Blanche?"

"Who is he? And you've been here a week, Grace, and don't know? He's the catch of the season. That's Washington Hawkins--her brother."

"No, is it?"

"Very old family, old Kentucky family I believe. He's got enormous landed property in Tennessee, I think. The family lost everything, slaves and that sort of thing, you know, in the war. But they have a great deal of land, minerals, mines and all that. Mr. Hawkins and his sister too are very much interested in the amelioration of the condition of the colored race; they have some plan, with Senator Dilworthy, to convert a large part of their property to something another for the freedmen."

"You don't say so? I thought he was some guy from Pennsylvania. But he is different from others. Probably he has lived all his life on his plantation."

It was a day reception of Mrs. Representative Schoonmaker, a sweet woman, of simple and sincere manners. Her house was one of the most popular in Washington. There was less ostentation there than in some others, and people liked to go where the atmosphere reminded them of the peace and purity of home. Mrs. Schoonmaker was as natural and unaffected in Washington society as she was in her own New York house, and kept up the spirit of home-life there, with her husband and children. And that was the reason, probably, why people of refinement liked to go there.

Washington is a microcosm, and one can suit himself with any sort of society within a radius of a mile. To a large portion of the people who frequent Washington or dwell where, the ultra fashion, the shoddy, the jobbery are as utterly distasteful as they would be in a refined New England City. Schoonmaker was not exactly a leader in the House, but he was greatly respected for his fine talents and his honesty. No one would have thought of offering to carry National Improvement Directors Relief stock for him.

These day receptions were attended by more women than men, and those interested in the problem might have studied the costumes of the ladies present, in view of this fact, to discover whether women dress more for the eyes of women or for effect upon men. It is a very important problem, and has been a good deal discussed, and its solution would form one fixed, philosophical basis, upon which to estimate woman's character. We are inclined to take a medium ground, and aver that woman dresses to please herself, and in obedience to a law of her own nature.

"They are coming this way," said Blanche. People who made way for them to pass, turned to look at them. Washington began to feel that the eyes of the public were on him also, and his eyes rolled about, now towards the ceiling, now towards the floor, in an effort to look unconscious.

"Good morning, Miss Hawkins. Delighted. Mr. Hawkins. My friend, Miss Medlar."

Mr. Hawkins, who was endeavoring to square himself for a bow, put his foot through the train of Mrs. Senator Poplin, who looked round with a scowl, which turned into a smile as she saw who it was. In extricating himself, Mr. Hawkins, who had the care of his hat as well as the introduction on his mind, shambled against Miss Blanche, who said pardon, with the prettiest accent, as if the awkwardness were her own. And Mr. Hawkins righted himself.

"Don't you find it very warm to-day, Mr. Hawkins?" said Blanche, by way of a remark.

"It's awful hot," said Washington.

"It's warm for the season," continued Blanche pleasantly. "But I suppose you are accustomed to it," she added, with a general idea that the thermometer always stands at 90 deg. in all parts of the late slave states. "Washington weather generally cannot be very congenial to you?"

"It's congenial," said Washington brightening up, "when it's not congealed."

"That's very good. Did you hear, Grace, Mr. Hawkins says it's congenial when it's not congealed."

"What is, dear?" said Grace, who was talking with Laura.

The conversation was now finely under way. Washington launched out an observation of his own.

"Did you see those Japs, Miss Leavitt?"

"Oh, yes, aren't they queer. But so high-bred, so picturesque. Do you think that color makes any difference, Mr. Hawkins? I used to be so prejudiced against color."

"Did you? I never was. I used to think my old mammy was handsome."

"How interesting your life must have been! I should like to hear about it."

Washington was about settling himself into his narrative style, when Mrs. Gen. McFingal caught his eye.

"Have you been at the Capitol to-day, Mr. Hawkins?"

Washington had not. "Is anything uncommon going on?"

"They say it was very exciting. The Alabama business you know. Gen. Sutler, of Massachusetts, defied England, and they say he wants war."

"He wants to make himself conspicuous more like," said Laura. "He always, you have noticed, talks with one eye on the gallery, while the other is on the speaker."

"Well, my husband says, its nonsense to talk of war, and wicked. He knows what war is. If we do have war, I hope it will be for the patriots of Cuba. Don't you think we want Cuba, Mr. Hawkins?"

"I think we want it bad," said Washington. "And Santo Domingo. Senator Dilworthy says, we are bound to extend our religion over the isles of the sea. We've got to round out our territory, and--"

Washington's further observations were broken off by Laura, who whisked him off to another part of the room, and reminded him that they must make their adieux.

"How stupid and tiresome these people are," she said. "Let's go."

They were turning to say good-bye to the hostess, when Laura's attention was arrested by the sight of a gentleman who was just speaking to Mrs. Schoonmaker. For a second her heart stopped beating. He was a handsome man of forty and perhaps more, with grayish hair and whiskers, and he walked with a cane, as if he were slightly lame. He might be less than forty, for his face was worn into hard lines, and he was pale.

No. It could not be, she said to herself. It is only a resemblance. But as the gentleman turned and she saw his full face, Laura put out her hand and clutched Washington's arm to prevent herself from falling.

Washington, who was not minding anything, as usual, looked 'round in wonder. Laura's eyes were blazing fire and hatred; he had never seen her look so before; and her face, was livid.

"Why, what is it, sis? Your face is as white as paper."

"It's he, it's he. Come, come," and she dragged him away.

"It's who?" asked Washington, when they had gained the carriage.

"It's nobody, it's nothing. Did I say he? I was faint with the heat. Don't mention it. Don't you speak of it," she added earnestly, grasping his arm.

When she had gained her room she went to the glass and saw a pallid and haggard face.

"My God," she cried, "this will never do. I should have killed him, if I could. The scoundrel still lives, and dares to come here. I ought to kill him. He has no right to live. How I hate him. And yet I loved him. Oh heavens, how I did love that man. And why didn't he kill me? He might better. He did kill all that was good in me. Oh, but he shall not escape. He shall not escape this time. He may have forgotten. He will find that a woman's hate doesn't forget. The law? What would the law do but protect him and make me an outcast? How all Washington would gather up its virtuous skirts and avoid me, if it knew. I wonder if he hates me as I do him?"

So Laura raved, in tears and in rage by turns, tossed in a tumult of passion, which she gave way to with little effort to control.

A servant came to summon her to dinner. She had a headache. The hour came for the President's reception. She had a raving headache, and the Senator must go without her.

That night of agony was like another night she recalled. How vividly it all came back to her. And at that time she remembered she thought she might be mistaken. He might come back to her. Perhaps he loved her, a little, after all. Now, she knew he did not. Now, she knew he was a cold-blooded scoundrel, without pity. Never a word in all these years. She had hoped he was dead. Did his wife live, she wondered. She caught at that--and it gave a new current to her thoughts. Perhaps, after all --she must see him. She could not live without seeing him. Would he smile as in the old days when she loved him so; or would he sneer as when she last saw him? If he looked so, she hated him. If he should call her "Laura, darling," and look SO! She must find him. She must end her doubts.

Laura kept her room for two days, on one excuse and another--a nervous headache, a cold--to the great anxiety of the Senator's household. Callers, who went away, said she had been too gay--they did not say "fast," though some of them may have thought it. One so conspicuous and successful in society as Laura could not be out of the way two days, without remarks being made, and not all of them complimentary.

When she came down she appeared as usual, a little pale may be, but unchanged in manner. If there were any deepened lines about the eyes they had been concealed. Her course of action was quite determined.

At breakfast she asked if any one had heard any unusual noise during the night? Nobody had. Washington never heard any noise of any kind after his eyes were shut. Some people thought he never did when they were open either.

Senator Dilworthy said he had come in late. He was detained in a little consultation after the Congressional prayer meeting. Perhaps it was his entrance.

No, Laura said. She heard that. It was later. She might have been nervous, but she fancied somebody was trying to get into the house.

Mr. Brierly humorously suggested that it might be, as none of the members were occupied in night session.

The Senator frowned, and said he did not like to hear that kind of newspaper slang. There might be burglars about.

Laura said that very likely it was only her nervousness. But she thought she would feel safer if Washington would let her take one of his pistols. Washington brought her one of his revolvers, and instructed her in the art of loading and firing it.

During the morning Laura drove down to Mrs. Schoonmaker's to pay a friendly call.

"Your receptions are always delightful," she said to that lady, "the pleasant people all seem to come here."

"It's pleasant to hear you say so, Miss Hawkins. I believe my friends like to come here. Though society in Washington is mixed; we have a little of everything."

"I suppose, though, you don't see much of the old rebel element?" said Laura with a smile.

If this seemed to Mrs. Schoonmaker a singular remark for a lady to make, who was meeting "rebels" in society every day, she did not express it in any way, but only said,

"You know we don't say 'rebel' anymore. Before we came to Washington I thought rebels would look unlike other people. I find we are very much alike, and that kindness and good nature wear away prejudice. And then you know there are all sorts of common interests. My husband sometimes says that he doesn't see but confederates are just as eager to get at the treasury as Unionists. You know that Mr. Schoonmaker is on the appropriations."

"Does he know many Southerners?"

"Oh, yes. There were several at my reception the other day. Among others a confederate Colonel--a stranger--handsome man with gray hair, probably you didn't notice him, uses a cane in walking. A very agreeable man. I wondered why he called. When my husband came home and looked over the cards, he said he had a cotton claim. A real southerner. Perhaps you might know him if I could think of his name. Yes, here's his card--Louisiana."

Laura took the card, looked at it intently till she was sure of the address, and then laid it down, with,

"No, he is no friend of ours."

That afternoon, Laura wrote and dispatched the following note. It was in a round hand, unlike her flowing style, and it was directed to a number and street in Georgetown:--

"A Lady at Senator Dilworthy's would like to see Col. George Selby, on business connected with the Cotton Claims. Can he call Wednesday at three o'clock P. M.?"

On Wednesday at 3 P. M, no one of the family was likely to be in the house except Laura.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Col. Selby had just come to Washington, and taken lodgings in Georgetown. His business was to get pay for some cotton that was destroyed during the war. There were many others in Washington on the same errand, some of them with claims as difficult to establish as his. A concert of action was necessary, and he was not, therefore, at all surprised to receive the note from a lady asking him to call at Senator Dilworthy's.

At a little after three on Wednesday he rang the bell of the Senator's residence. It was a handsome mansion on the Square opposite the President's house. The owner must be a man of great wealth, the Colonel thought; perhaps, who knows, said he with a smile, he may have got some of my cotton in exchange for salt and quinine after the capture of New Orleans. As this thought passed through his mind he was looking at the remarkable figure of the Hero of New Orleans, holding itself by main strength from sliding off the back of the rearing bronze horse, and lifting its hat in the manner of one who acknowledges the playing of that martial air: "See, the Conquering Hero Comes!" "Gad," said the Colonel to himself, "Old Hickory ought to get down and give his seat to Gen. Sutler--but they'd have to tie him on."

Laura was in the drawing room. She heard the bell, she heard the steps in the hall, and the emphatic thud of the supporting cane. She had risen from her chair and was leaning against the piano, pressing her left hand against the violent beating of her heart. The door opened and the Colonel entered, standing in the full light of the opposite window. Laura was more in the shadow and stood for an instant, long enough for the Colonel to make the inward observation that she was a magnificent Woman. She then advanced a step.

"Col. Selby, is it not?"

The Colonel staggered back, caught himself by a chair, and turned towards her a look of terror.

"Laura? My God!"

"Yes, your wife!"

"Oh, no, it can't be. How came you here? I thought you were--"

"You thought I was dead? You thought you were rid of me? Not so long as you live, Col. Selby, not so long as you live;" Laura in her passion was hurried on to say.

No man had ever accused Col. Selby of cowardice. But he was a coward before this woman. May be he was not the man he once was. Where was his coolness? Where was his sneering, imperturbable manner, with which he could have met, and would have met, any woman he had wronged, if he had only been forewarned. He felt now that he must temporize, that he must gain time. There was danger in Laura's tone. There was something frightful in her calmness. Her steady eyes seemed to devour him.

"You have ruined my life," she said; "and I was so young, so ignorant, and loved you so. You betrayed me, and left me mocking me and trampling me into the dust, a soiled cast-off. You might better have killed me then. Then I should not have hated you."

"Laura," said the Colonel, nerving himself, but still pale, and speaking appealingly, "don't say that. Reproach me. I deserve it. I was a scoundrel. I was everything monstrous. But your beauty made me crazy. You are right. I was a brute in leaving you as I did. But what could I do? I was married, and--"

"And your wife still lives?" asked Laura, bending a little forward in her eagerness.

The Colonel noticed the action, and he almost said "no," but he thought of the folly of attempting concealment.

"Yes. She is here."

What little color had wandered back into Laura's face forsook it again. Her heart stood still, her strength seemed going from her limbs. Her last hope was gone. The room swam before her for a moment, and the Colonel stepped towards her, but she waved him back, as hot anger again coursed through her veins, and said,

"And you dare come with her, here, and tell me of it, here and mock me with it! And you think I will have it; George? You think I will let you live with that woman? You think I am as powerless as that day I fell dead at your feet?"

She raged now. She was in a tempest of excitement. And she advanced towards him with a threatening mien. She would kill me if she could, thought the Colonel; but he thought at the same moment, how beautiful she is. He had recovered his head now. She was lovely when he knew her, then a simple country girl, Now she was dazzling, in the fullness of ripe

womanhood, a superb creature, with all the fascination that a woman of the world has for such a man as Col. Selby. Nothing of this was lost on him. He stepped quickly to her, grasped both her hands in his, and said,

"Laura, stop! think! Suppose I loved you yet! Suppose I hated my fate! What can I do? I am broken by the war. I have lost everything almost. I had as lief be dead and done with it."

The Colonel spoke with a low remembered voice that thrilled through Laura. He was looking into her eyes as he had looked in those old days, when no birds of all those that sang in the groves where they walked sang a note of warning. He was wounded. He had been punished. Her strength forsook her with her rage, and she sank upon a chair, sobbing,

"Oh! my God, I thought I hated him!"

The Colonel knelt beside her. He took her hand and she let him keep it. She, looked down into his face, with a pitiable tenderness, and said in a weak voice.

"And you do love me a little?"

The Colonel vowed and protested. He kissed her hand and her lips. He swore his false soul into perdition.

She wanted love, this woman. Was not her love for George Selby deeper than any other woman's could be? Had she not a right to him? Did he not belong to her by virtue of her overmastering passion? His wife--she was not his wife, except by the law. She could not be. Even with the law she could have no right to stand between two souls that were one. It was an infamous condition in society that George should be tied to her.

Laura thought this, believed it; because she desired to believe it. She came to it as an original proposition founded on the requirements of her own nature. She may have heard, doubtless she had, similar theories that were prevalent at that day, theories of the tyranny of marriage and of the freedom of marriage. She had even heard women lecturers say, that marriage should only continue so long as it pleased either party to it --for a year, or a month, or a day. She had not given much heed to this, but she saw its justice now in a dash of revealing desire. It must be right. God would not have permitted her to love George Selby as she did, and him to love her, if it was right for society to raise up a barrier between them. He belonged to her. Had he not confessed it himself?

Not even the religious atmosphere of Senator Dilworthy's house had been sufficient to instill into Laura that deep Christian principle which had been somehow omitted in her training. Indeed in that very house had she not heard women, prominent before the country and besieging Congress, utter sentiments that fully justified the course she was marking out for herself.

They were seated now, side by side, talking with more calmness. Laura was happy, or thought she was. But it was that feverish sort of happiness which is snatched out of the black shadow of falsehood, and is at the moment recognized as fleeting and perilous, and indulged tremblingly. She loved. She was loved. That is happiness certainly. And the black past and the troubled present and the uncertain future

could not snatch that from her.

What did they say as they sat there? What nothings do people usually say in such circumstances, even if they are three-score and ten? It was enough for Laura to hear his voice and be near him. It was enough for him to be near her, and avoid committing himself as much as he could. Enough for him was the present also. Had there not always been some way out of such scrapes?

And yet Laura could not be quite content without prying into tomorrow. How could the Colonel manage to free himself from his wife? Would it be long? Could he not go into some State where it would not take much time? He could not say exactly. That they must think of. That they must talk over. And so on. Did this seem like a damnable plot to Laura against the life, maybe, of a sister, a woman like herself? Probably not. It was right that this man should be hers, and there were some obstacles in the way. That was all. There are as good reasons for bad actions as for good ones,—to those who commit them. When one has broken the tenth commandment, the others are not of much account.

Was it unnatural, therefore, that when George Selby departed, Laura should watch him from the window, with an almost joyful heart as he went down the sunny square? "I shall see him to-morrow," she said, "and the next day, and the next. He is mine now."

"Damn the woman," said the Colonel as he picked his way down the steps. "Or," he added, as his thoughts took a new turn, "I wish my wife was in New Orleans."

CHAPTER XL.

Open your ears; for which of you will stop,
The vent of hearing when loud Rumor speaks?
I, from the orient to the drooping west,
Making the wind my post-horse, still unfold
The acts commenced on this ball of earth:
Upon my tongues continual slanders ride;
The which in every, language I pronounce,
Stuffing the ears of men with false reports.

King Henry IV.

As may be readily believed, Col. Beriah Sellers was by this time one of the best known men in Washington. For the first time in his life his talents had a fair field.

He was now at the centre of the manufacture of gigantic schemes, of speculations of all sorts, of political and social gossip. The atmosphere was full of little and big rumors and of vast, undefined expectations. Everybody was in haste, too, to push on his private plan, and feverish in his haste, as if in constant apprehension that tomorrow would be Judgment Day. Work while Congress is in session, said the uneasy spirit, for in the recess there is no work and no device.

The Colonel enjoyed this bustle and confusion amazingly; he thrived in the air of-indefinite expectation. All his own schemes took larger shape

and more misty and majestic proportions; and in this congenial air, the Colonel seemed even to himself to expand into something large and mysterious. If he respected himself before, he almost worshipped Beriah Sellers now, as a superior being. If he could have chosen an official position out of the highest, he would have been embarrassed in the selection. The presidency of the republic seemed too limited and cramped in the constitutional restrictions. If he could have been Grand Llama of the United States, that might have come the nearest to his idea of a position. And next to that he would have luxuriated in the irresponsible omniscience of the Special Correspondent.

Col. Sellers knew the President very well, and had access to his presence when officials were kept cooling their heels in the Waiting-room. The President liked to hear the Colonel talk, his voluble ease was a refreshment after the decorous dullness of men who only talked business and government, and everlastingly expounded their notions of justice and the distribution of patronage. The Colonel was as much a lover of farming and of horses as Thomas Jefferson was. He talked to the President by the hour about his magnificent stud, and his plantation at Hawkeye, a kind of principality--he represented it. He urged the President to pay him a visit during the recess, and see his stock farm.

"The President's table is well enough," he used to say, to the loafers who gathered about him at Willard's, "well enough for a man on a salary, but God bless my soul, I should like him to see a little old-fashioned hospitality--open house, you know. A person seeing me at home might think I paid no attention to what was in the house, just let things flow in and out. He'd be mistaken. What I look to is quality, sir. The President has variety enough, but the quality! Vegetables of course you can't expect here. I'm very particular about mine. Take celery, now--there's only one spot in this country where celery will grow. But I am surprised about the wines. I should think they were manufactured in the New York Custom House. I must send the President some from my cellar. I was really mortified the other day at dinner to see Blacque Bey leave his standing in the glasses."

When the Colonel first came to Washington he had thoughts of taking the mission to Constantinople, in order to be on the spot to look after the dissemination, of his Eye Water, but as that invention; was not yet quite ready, the project shrank a little in the presence of vaster schemes. Besides he felt that he could do the country more good by remaining at home. He was one of the Southerners who were constantly quoted as heartily "accepting the situation."

"I'm whipped," he used to say with a jolly laugh, "the government was too many for me; I'm cleaned out, done for, except my plantation and private mansion. We played for a big thing, and lost it, and I don't whine, for one. I go for putting the old flag on all the vacant lots. I said to the President, says I, 'Grant, why don't you take Santo Domingo, annex the whole thing, and settle the bill afterwards. That's my way. I'd, take the job to manage Congress. The South would come into it. You've got to conciliate the South, consolidate the two debts, pay 'em off in greenbacks, and go ahead. That's my notion. Boutwell's got the right notion about the value of paper, but he lacks courage. I should like to run the treasury department about six months. I'd make things plenty, and business look up.'"

The Colonel had access to the departments. He knew all the senators and representatives, and especially, the lobby. He was consequently a great

favorite in Newspaper Row, and was often lounging in the offices there, dropping bits of private, official information, which were immediately, caught up and telegraphed all over the country. But it need to surprise even the Colonel when he read it, it was embellished to that degree that he hardly recognized it, and the hint was not lost on him. He began to exaggerate his heretofore simple conversation to suit the newspaper demand.

People used to wonder in the winters of 187- and 187-, where the "Specials" got that remarkable information with which they every morning surprised the country, revealing the most secret intentions of the President and his cabinet, the private thoughts of political leaders, the hidden meaning of every movement. This information was furnished by Col. Sellers.

When he was asked, afterwards, about the stolen copy of the Alabama Treaty which got into the "New York Tribune," he only looked mysterious, and said that neither he nor Senator Dilworthy knew anything about it. But those whom he was in the habit of meeting occasionally felt almost certain that he did know.

It must not be supposed that the Colonel in his general patriotic labors neglected his own affairs. The Columbus River Navigation Scheme absorbed only a part of his time, so he was enabled to throw quite a strong reserve force of energy into the Tennessee Land plan, a vast enterprise commensurate with his abilities, and in the prosecution of which he was greatly aided by Mr. Henry Brierly, who was buzzing about the capitol and the hotels day and night, and making capital for it in some mysterious way.

"We must create, a public opinion," said Senator Dilworthy. "My only interest in it is a public one, and if the country wants the institution, Congress will have to yield."

It may have been after a conversation between the Colonel and Senator Dilworthy that the following special despatch was sent to a New York newspaper:

"We understand that a philanthropic plan is on foot in relation to the colored race that will, if successful, revolutionize the whole character of southern industry. An experimental institution is in contemplation in Tennessee which will do for that state what the Industrial School at Zurich did for Switzerland. We learn that approaches have been made to the heirs of the late Hon. Silas Hawkins of Missouri, in reference to a lease of a portion of their valuable property in East Tennessee. Senator Dilworthy, it is understood, is inflexibly opposed to any arrangement that will not give the government absolute control. Private interests must give way to the public good. It is to be hoped that Col. Sellers, who represents the heirs, will be led to see the matter in this light."

When Washington Hawkins read this despatch, he went to the Colonel in some anxiety. He was for a lease, he didn't want to surrender anything. What did he think the government would offer? Two millions?

"May be three, may be four," said the Colonel, "it's worth more than the bank of England."

"If they will not lease," said Washington, "let 'em make it two millions

for an undivided half. I'm not going to throw it away, not the whole of it."

Harry told the Colonel that they must drive the thing through, he couldn't be dallying round Washington when Spring opened. Phil wanted him, Phil had a great thing on hand up in Pennsylvania.

"What is that?" inquired the Colonel, always ready to interest himself in anything large.

"A mountain of coal; that's all. He's going to run a tunnel into it in the Spring."

"Does he want any capital?", asked the Colonel, in the tone of a man who is given to calculating carefully before he makes an investment.

"No. Old man Bolton's behind him. He has capital, but I judged that he wanted my experience in starting."

"If he wants me, tell him I'll come, after Congress adjourns. I should like to give him a little lift. He lacks enterprise--now, about that Columbus River. He doesn't see his chances. But he's a good fellow, and you can tell him that Sellers won't go back on him."

"By the way," asked Harry, "who is that rather handsome party that's hanging 'round Laura? I see him with her everywhere, at the Capitol, in the horse cars, and he comes to Dilworthy's. If he weren't lame, I should think he was going to run off with her."

"Oh, that's nothing. Laura knows her business. He has a cotton claim. Used to be at Hawkeye during the war.

"Selby's his name, was a Colonel. Got a wife and family. Very respectable people, the Selby's."

"Well, that's all right," said Harry, "if it's business. But if a woman looked at me as I've seen her at Selby, I should understand it. And it's talked about, I can tell you."

Jealousy had no doubt sharpened this young gentleman's observation. Laura could not have treated him with more lofty condescension if she had been the Queen of Sheba, on a royal visit to the great republic. And he resented it, and was "huffy" when he was with her, and ran her errands, and brought her gossip, and bragged of his intimacy with the lovely creature among the fellows at Newspaper Row.

Laura's life was rushing on now in the full stream of intrigue and fashionable dissipation. She was conspicuous at the balls of the fastest set, and was suspected of being present at those doubtful suppers that began late and ended early. If Senator Dilworthy remonstrated about appearances, she had a way of silencing him. Perhaps she had some hold on him, perhaps she was necessary to his plan for ameliorating the condition the tube colored race.

She saw Col. Selby, when the public knew and when it did not know. She would see him, whatever excuses he made, and however he avoided her. She was urged on by a fever of love and hatred and jealousy, which alternately possessed her. Sometimes she petted him, and coaxed him and tried all her fascinations. And again she threatened him and reproached

him. What was he doing? Why had he taken no steps to free himself? Why didn't he send his wife home? She should have money soon. They could go to Europe--anywhere. What did she care for talk?

And he promised, and lied, and invented fresh excuses for delay, like a cowardly gambler and roue as he was, fearing to break with her, and half the time unwilling to give her up.

"That woman doesn't know what fear is," he said to himself, "and she watches me like a hawk."

He told his wife that this woman was a lobbyist, whom he had to tolerate and use in getting through his claims, and that he should pay her and have done with her, when he succeeded.

CHAPTER XLI.

Henry Brierly was at the Dilworthy's constantly and on such terms of intimacy that he came and went without question. The Senator was not an inhospitable man, he liked to have guests in his house, and Harry's gay humor and rattling way entertained him; for even the most devout men and busy statesmen must have hours of relaxation.

Harry himself believed that he was of great service in the University business, and that the success of the scheme depended upon him to a great degree. He spent many hours in talking it over with the Senator after dinner. He went so far as to consider whether it would be worth his while to take the professorship of civil engineering in the new institution.

But it was not the Senator's society nor his dinners--at which this scapegrace remarked that there was too much grace and too little wine--which attracted him to the house. The fact was the poor fellow hung around there day after day for the chance of seeing Laura for five minutes at a time. For her presence at dinner he would endure the long bore of the Senator's talk afterwards, while Laura was off at some assembly, or excused herself on the plea of fatigue. Now and then he accompanied her to some reception, and rarely, on off nights, he was blessed with her company in the parlor, when he sang, and was chatty and vivacious and performed a hundred little tricks of imitation and ventriloquism, and made himself as entertaining as a man could be.

It puzzled him not a little that all his fascinations seemed to go for so little with Laura; it was beyond his experience with women. Sometimes Laura was exceedingly kind and petted him a little, and took the trouble to exert her powers of pleasing, and to entangle him deeper and deeper. But this, it angered him afterwards to think, was in private; in public she was beyond his reach, and never gave occasion to the suspicion that she had any affair with him. He was never permitted to achieve the dignity of a serious flirtation with her in public.

"Why do you treat me so?" he once said, reproachfully.

"Treat you how?" asked Laura in a sweet voice, lifting her eyebrows.

"You know well enough. You let other fellows monopolize you in society,

and you are as indifferent to me as if we were strangers."

"Can I help it if they are attentive, can I be rude? But we are such old friends, Mr. Brierly, that I didn't suppose you would be jealous."

"I think I must be a very old friend, then, by your conduct towards me. By the same rule I should judge that Col. Selby must be very new."

Laura looked up quickly, as if about to return an indignant answer to such impertinence, but she only said, "Well, what of Col. Selby, sauce-box?"

"Nothing, probably, you'll care for. Your being with him so much is the town talk, that's all?"

"What do people say?" asked Laura calmly.

"Oh, they say a good many things. You are offended, though, to have me speak of it?"

"Not in the least. You are my true friend. I feel that I can trust you. You wouldn't deceive me, Harry?" throwing into her eyes a look of trust and tenderness that melted away all his petulance and distrust. "What do they say?"

"Some say that you've lost your head about him; others that you don't care any more for him than you do for a dozen others, but that he is completely fascinated with you and about to desert his wife; and others say it is nonsense to suppose you would entangle yourself with a married man, and that your intimacy only arises from the matter of the cotton, claims, for which he wants your influence with Dilworthy. But you know everybody is talked about more or less in Washington. I shouldn't care; but I wish you wouldn't have so much to do with Selby, Laura," continued Harry, fancying that he was now upon such terms that his, advice, would be heeded.

"And you believed these slanders?"

"I don't believe anything against you, Laura, but Col. Selby does not mean you any good. I know you wouldn't be seen with him if you knew his reputation."

"Do you know him?" Laura asked, as indifferently as she could.

"Only a little. I was at his lodgings' in Georgetown a day or two ago, with Col. Sellers. Sellers wanted to talk with him about some patent remedy he has, Eye Water, or something of that sort, which he wants to introduce into Europe. Selby is going abroad very soon."

Laura started; in spite of her self-control.

"And his wife!--Does he take his family? Did you see his wife?"

"Yes. A dark little woman, rather worn--must have been pretty once though. Has three or four children, one of them a baby. They'll all go of course. She said she should be glad enough to get away from Washington. You know Selby has got his claim allowed, and they say he has had a run, of luck lately at Morrissey's."

Laura heard all this in a kind of stupor, looking straight at Harry, without seeing him. Is it possible, she was thinking, that this base wretch, after, all his promises, will take his wife and children and leave me? Is it possible the town is saying all these things about me? And a look of bitterness coming into her face--does the fool think he can escape so?

"You are angry with me, Laura," said Harry, not comprehending in the least what was going on in her mind.

"Angry?" she said, forcing herself to come back to his presence. "With you? Oh no. I'm angry with the cruel world, which, pursues an independent woman as it never does a man. I'm grateful to you Harry; I'm grateful to you for telling me of that odious man."

And she rose from her chair and gave him her pretty hand, which the silly fellow took, and kissed and clung to. And he said many silly things, before she disengaged herself gently, and left him, saying it was time to dress, for dinner.

And Harry went away, excited, and a little hopeful, but only a little. The happiness was only a gleam, which departed and left him thoroughly, miserable. She never would love him, and she was going to the devil, besides. He couldn't shut his eyes to what he saw, nor his ears to what he heard of her.

What had come over this thrilling young lady-killer? It was a pity to see such a gay butterfly broken on a wheel. Was there something good in him, after all, that had been touched? He was in fact madly in love with this woman.

It is not for us to analyze the passion and say whether it was a worthy one. It absorbed his whole nature and made him wretched enough. If he deserved punishment, what more would you have? Perhaps this love was kindling a new heroism in him.

He saw the road on which Laura was going clearly enough, though he did not believe the worst he heard of her. He loved her too passionately to credit that for a moment. And it seemed to him that if he could compel her to recognize her position, and his own devotion, she might love him, and that he could save her. His love was so far ennobled, and become a very different thing from its beginning in Hawkeye. Whether he ever thought that if he could save her from ruin, he could give her up himself, is doubtful. Such a pitch of virtue does not occur often in real life, especially in such natures as Harry's, whose generosity and unselfishness were matters of temperament rather than habits or principles.

He wrote a long letter to Laura, an incoherent, passionate letter, pouring out his love as he could not do in her presence, and warning her as plainly as he dared of the dangers that surrounded her, and the risks she ran of compromising herself in many ways.

Laura read the letter, with a little sigh may be, as she thought of other days, but with contempt also, and she put it into the fire with the thought, "They are all alike."

Harry was in the habit of writing to Philip freely, and boasting also about his doings, as he could not help doing and remain himself.

Mixed up with his own exploits, and his daily triumphs as a lobbyist, especially in the matter of the new University, in which Harry was to have something handsome, were amusing sketches of Washington society, hints about Dilworthy, stories about Col. Sellers, who had become a well-known character, and wise remarks upon the machinery of private legislation for the public-good, which greatly entertained Philip in his convalescence.

Laura's name occurred very often in these letters, at first in casual mention as the belle of the season, carrying everything before her with her wit and beauty, and then more seriously, as if Harry did not exactly like so much general admiration of her, and was a little nettled by her treatment of him.

This was so different from Harry's usual tone about women, that Philip wondered a good deal over it. Could it be possible that he was seriously affected? Then came stories about Laura, town talk, gossip which Harry denied the truth of indignantly; but he was evidently uneasy, and at length wrote in such miserable spirits that Philip asked him squarely what the trouble was; was he in love?

Upon this, Harry made a clean breast of it, and told Philip all he knew about the Selby affair, and Laura's treatment of him, sometimes encouraging him--and then throwing him off, and finally his belief that she would go, to the bad if something was not done to arouse her from her infatuation. He wished Philip was in Washington. He knew Laura, and she had a great respect for his character, his opinions, his judgment. Perhaps he, as an uninterested person whom she would have some confidence, and as one of the public, could say some thing to her that would show her where she stood.

Philip saw the situation clearly enough. Of Laura he knew not much, except that she was a woman of uncommon fascination, and he thought from what he had seen of her in Hawkeye, her conduct towards him and towards Harry, of not too much principle. Of course he knew nothing of her history; he knew nothing seriously against her, and if Harry was desperately enamored of her, why should he not win her if he could. If, however, she had already become what Harry uneasily felt she might become, was it not his duty to go to the rescue of his friend and try to save him from any rash act on account of a woman that might prove to be entirely unworthy of him; for trifler and visionary as he was, Harry deserved a better fate than this.

Philip determined to go to Washington and see for himself. He had other reasons also. He began to know enough of Mr. Bolton's affairs to be uneasy. Pennybacker had been there several times during the winter, and he suspected that he was involving Mr. Bolton in some doubtful scheme. Pennybacker was in Washington, and Philip thought he might perhaps find out something about him, and his plans, that would be of service to Mr. Bolton.

Philip had enjoyed his winter very well, for a man with his arm broken and his head smashed. With two such nurses as Ruth and Alice, illness seemed to him rather a nice holiday, and every moment of his convalescence had been precious and all too fleeting. With a young fellow of the habits of Philip, such injuries cannot be counted on to tarry long, even for the purpose of love-making, and Philip found himself getting strong with even disagreeable rapidity.

During his first weeks of pain and weakness, Ruth was unceasing in her ministrations; she quietly took charge of him, and with a gentle firmness resisted all attempts of Alice or any one else to share to any great extent the burden with her. She was clear, decisive and peremptory in whatever she did; but often when Philip, opened his eyes in those first days of suffering and found her standing by his bedside, he saw a look of tenderness in her anxious face that quickened his already feverish pulse, a look that, remained in his heart long after he closed his eyes. Sometimes he felt her hand on his forehead, and did not open his eyes for fear she would take it away. He watched for her coming to his chamber; he could distinguish her light footstep from all others. If this is what is meant by women practicing medicine, thought Philip to himself, I like it.

"Ruth," said he one day when he was getting to be quite himself, "I believe in it?"

"Believe in what?"

"Why, in women physicians."

"Then, I'd better call in Mrs. Dr. Longstreet."

"Oh, no. One will do, one at a time. I think I should be well tomorrow, if I thought I should never have any other."

"Thy physician thinks thee mustn't talk, Philip," said Ruth putting her finger on his lips.

"But, Ruth, I want to tell you that I should wish I never had got well if--"

"There, there, thee must not talk. Thee is wandering again," and Ruth closed his lips, with a smile on her own that broadened into a merry laugh as she ran away.

Philip was not weary, however, of making these attempts, he rather enjoyed it. But whenever he inclined to be sentimental, Ruth would cut him off, with some such gravely conceived speech as, "Does thee think that thy physician will take advantage of the condition of a man who is as weak as thee is? I will call Alice, if thee has any dying confessions to make."

As Philip convalesced, Alice more and more took Ruth's place as his entertainer, and read to him by the hour, when he did not want to talk --to talk about Ruth, as he did a good deal of the time. Nor was this altogether unsatisfactory to Philip. He was always happy and contented with Alice. She was the most restful person he knew. Better informed than Ruth and with a much more varied culture, and bright and sympathetic, he was never weary of her company, if he was not greatly excited by it. She had upon his mind that peaceful influence that Mrs. Bolton had when, occasionally, she sat by his bedside with her work. Some people have this influence, which is like an emanation. They bring peace to a house, they diffuse serene content in a room full of mixed company, though they may say very little, and are apparently, unconscious of their own power.

Not that Philip did not long for Ruth's presence all the same. Since he was well enough to be about the house, she was busy again with her

studies. Now and then her teasing humor came again. She always had a playful shield against his sentiment. Philip used sometimes to declare that she had no sentiment; and then he doubted if he should be pleased with her after all if she were at all sentimental; and he rejoiced that she had, in such matters what he called the airy grace of sanity. She was the most gay serious person he ever saw.

Perhaps he was not so much at rest or so contented with her as with Alice. But then he loved her. And what have rest and contentment to do with love?

CHAPTER XLII

Mr. Buckstone's campaign was brief--much briefer than he supposed it would be. He began it purposing to win Laura without being won himself; but his experience was that of all who had fought on that field before him; he diligently continued his effort to win her, but he presently found that while as yet he could not feel entirely certain of having won her, it was very manifest that she had won him. He had made an able fight, brief as it was, and that at least was to his credit. He was in good company, now; he walked in a leash of conspicuous captives. These unfortunates followed Laura helplessly, for whenever she took a prisoner he remained her slave henceforth. Sometimes they chafed in their bondage; sometimes they tore themselves free and said their serfdom was ended; but sooner or later they always came back penitent and worshiping. Laura pursued her usual course: she encouraged Mr. Buckstone by turns, and by turns she harassed him; she exalted him to the clouds at one time, and at another she dragged him down again. She constituted him chief champion of the Knobs University bill, and he accepted the position, at first reluctantly, but later as a valued means of serving her--he even came to look upon it as a piece of great good fortune, since it brought him into such frequent contact with her.

Through him she learned that the Hon. Mr. Trollop was a bitter enemy of her bill. He urged her not to attempt to influence Mr. Trollop in any way, and explained that whatever she might attempt in that direction would surely be used against her and with damaging effect.

She at first said she knew Mr. Trollop, "and was aware that he had a Blank-Blank;"--["**Her private figure of speech for Brother--or Son-in-law]--but Mr. Buckstone said that he was not able to conceive what so curious a phrase as Blank-Blank might mean, and had no wish to pry into the matter, since it was probably private, he "would nevertheless venture the blind assertion that nothing would answer in this particular case and during this particular session but to be exceedingly wary and keep clear away from Mr. Trollop; any other course would be fatal."

It seemed that nothing could be done. Laura was seriously troubled. Everything was looking well, and yet it was plain that one vigorous and determined enemy might eventually succeed in overthrowing all her plans. A suggestion came into her mind presently and she said:

"Can't you fight against his great Pension bill and, bring him to terms?"

"Oh, never; he and I are sworn brothers on that measure; we work in harness and are very loving--I do everything I possibly can for him

there. But I work with might and main against his Immigration bill, --as pertinaciously and as vindictively, indeed, as he works against our University. We hate each other through half a conversation and are all affection through the other half. We understand each other. He is an admirable worker outside the capitol; he will do more for the Pension bill than any other man could do; I wish he would make the great speech on it which he wants to make--and then I would make another and we would be safe."

"Well if he wants to make a great speech why doesn't he do it?"

Visitors interrupted the conversation and Mr. Buckstone took his leave. It was not of the least moment to Laura that her question had not been answered, inasmuch as it concerned a thing which did not interest her; and yet, human being like, she thought she would have liked to know. An opportunity occurring presently, she put the same question to another person and got an answer that satisfied her. She pondered a good while that night, after she had gone to bed, and when she finally turned over, to go to sleep, she had thought out a new scheme. The next evening at Mrs. Glover's party, she said to Mr. Buckstone:

"I want Mr. Trollop to make his great speech on the Pension bill."

"Do you? But you remember I was interrupted, and did not explain to you--"

"Never mind, I know. You must' make him make that speech. I very particularly desire, it."

"Oh, it is easy, to say make him do it, but how am I to make him!"

"It is perfectly easy; I have thought it all out."

She then went into the details. At length Mr. Buckstone said:

"I see now. I can manage it, I am sure. Indeed I wonder he never thought of it himself--there are no end of precedents. But how is this going to benefit you, after I have managed it? There is where the mystery lies."

"But I will take care of that. It will benefit me a great deal."

"I only wish I could see how; it is the oddest freak. You seem to go the furthest around to get at a thing--but you are in earnest, aren't you?"

"Yes I am, indeed."

"Very well, I will do it--but why not tell me how you imagine it is going to help you?"

"I will, by and by.--Now there is nobody talking to him. Go straight and do it, there's a good fellow."

A moment or two later the two sworn friends of the Pension bill were talking together, earnestly, and seemingly unconscious of the moving throng about them. They talked an hour, and then Mr. Buckstone came back and said:

"He hardly fancied it at first, but he fell in love with it after a bit."

And we have made a compact, too. I am to keep his secret and he is to spare me, in future, when he gets ready to denounce the supporters of the University bill--and I can easily believe he will keep his word on this occasion."

A fortnight elapsed, and the University bill had gathered to itself many friends, meantime. Senator Dilworthy began to think the harvest was ripe. He conferred with Laura privately. She was able to tell him exactly how the House would vote. There was a majority--the bill would pass, unless weak members got frightened at the last, and deserted--a thing pretty likely to occur. The Senator said:

"I wish we had one more good strong man. Now Trollop ought to be on our side, for he is a friend of the negro. But he is against us, and is our bitterest opponent. If he would simply vote No, but keep quiet and not molest us, I would feel perfectly cheerful and content. But perhaps there is no use in thinking of that."

"Why I laid a little plan for his benefit two weeks ago. I think he will be tractable, maybe. He is to come here tonight."

"Look out for him, my child! He means mischief, sure. It is said that he claims to know of improper practices having been used in the interest of this bill, and he thinks he sees a chance to make a great sensation when the bill comes up. Be wary. Be very, very careful, my dear. Do your very-ablest talking, now. You can convince a man of anything, when you try. You must convince him that if anything improper has been done, you at least are ignorant of it and sorry for it. And if you could only persuade him out of his hostility to the bill, too--but don't overdo the thing; don't seem too anxious, dear."

"I won't; I'll be ever so careful. I'll talk as sweetly to him as if he were my own child! You may trust me--indeed you may."

The door-bell rang.

"That is the gentleman now," said Laura. Senator Dilworthy retired to his study.

Laura welcomed Mr. Trollop, a grave, carefully dressed and very respectable looking man, with a bald head, standing collar and old fashioned watch seals.

"Promptness is a virtue, Mr. Trollop, and I perceive that you have it. You are always prompt with me."

"I always meet my engagements, of every kind, Miss Hawkins."

"It is a quality which is rarer in the world than it has been, I believe. I wished to see you on business, Mr. Trollop."

"I judged so. What can I do for you?"

"You know my bill--the Knobs University bill?"

"Ah, I believe it is your bill. I had forgotten. Yes, I know the bill."

"Well, would you mind telling me your opinion of it?"

"Indeed, since you seem to ask it without reserve, I am obliged to say that I do not regard it favorably. I have not seen the bill itself, but from what I can hear, it--it--well, it has a bad look about it. It--"

"Speak it out--never fear."

"Well, it--they say it contemplates a fraud upon the government."

"Well?" said Laura tranquilly.

"Well! I say 'Well?' too."

"Well, suppose it were a fraud--which I feel able to deny--would it be the first one?"

"You take a body's breath away! Would you--did you wish me to vote for it? Was that what you wanted to see me about?"

"Your instinct is correct. I did want you--I do want you to vote for it."

"Vote for a fr--for a measure which is generally believed to be at least questionable? I am afraid we cannot come to an understanding, Miss Hawkins."

"No, I am afraid not--if you have resumed your principles, Mr. Trollop."

"Did you send for me merely to insult me? It is time for me to take my leave, Miss Hawkins."

"No--wait a moment. Don't be offended at a trifle. Do not be offish and unsociable. The Steamship Subsidy bill was a fraud on the government. You voted for it, Mr. Trollop, though you always opposed the measure until after you had an interview one evening with a certain Mrs. McCarter at her house. She was my agent. She was acting for me. Ah, that is right--sit down again. You can be sociable, easily enough if you have a mind to. Well? I am waiting. Have you nothing to say?"

"Miss Hawkins, I voted for that bill because when I came to examine into it--"

"Ah yes. When you came to examine into it. Well, I only want you to examine into my bill. Mr. Trollop, you would not sell your vote on that subsidy bill--which was perfectly right--but you accepted of some of the stock, with the understanding that it was to stand in your brother-in-law's name."

"There is no pr--I mean, this is, utterly groundless, Miss Hawkins." But the gentleman seemed somewhat uneasy, nevertheless.

"Well, not entirely so, perhaps. I and a person whom we will call Miss Blank (never mind the real name,) were in a closet at your elbow all the while."

Mr. Trollop winced--then he said with dignity:

"Miss Hawkins is it possible that you were capable of such a thing as that?"

"It was bad; I confess that. It was bad. Almost as bad as selling one's vote for--but I forget; you did not sell your vote--you only accepted a little trifle, a small token of esteem, for your brother-in-law. Oh, let us come out and be frank with each other: I know you, Mr. Trollop. I have met you on business three or four times; true, I never offered to corrupt your principles--never hinted such a thing; but always when I had finished sounding you, I manipulated you through an agent. Let us be frank. Wear this comely disguise of virtue before the public--it will count there; but here it is out of place. My dear sir, by and by there is going to be an investigation into that National Internal Improvement Directors' Relief Measure of a few years ago, and you know very well that you will be a crippled man, as likely as not, when it is completed."

"It cannot be shown that a man is a knave merely for owning that stock. I am not distressed about the National Improvement Relief Measure."

"Oh indeed I am not trying to distress you. I only wished, to make good my assertion that I knew you. Several of you gentlemen bought of that stock (without paying a penny down) received dividends from it, (think of the happy idea of receiving dividends, and very large ones, too, from stock one hasn't paid for!) and all the while your names never appeared in the transaction; if ever you took the stock at all, you took it in other people's names. Now you see, you had to know one of two things; namely, you either knew that the idea of all this preposterous generosity was to bribe you into future legislative friendship, or you didn't know it. That is to say, you had to be either a knave or a--well, a fool--there was no middle ground. You are not a fool, Mr. Trollop."

"Miss Hawking you flatter me. But seriously, you do not forget that some of the best and purest men in Congress took that stock in that way?"

"Did Senator Bland?"

"Well, no--I believe not."

"Of course you believe not. Do you suppose he was ever approached, on the subject?"

"Perhaps not."

"If you had approached him, for instance, fortified with the fact that some of the best men in Congress, and the purest, etc., etc.; what would have been the result?"

"Well, what WOULD have been the result?"

"He would have shown you the door! For Mr. Blank is neither a knave nor a fool. There are other men in the Senate and the House whom no one would have been hardy enough to approach with that Relief Stock in that peculiarly generous way, but they are not of the class that you regard as the best and purest. No, I say I know you Mr. Trollop. That is to say, one may suggest a thing to Mr. Trollop which it would not do to suggest to Mr. Blank. Mr. Trollop, you are pledged to support the Indigent Congressmen's Retroactive Appropriation which is to come up, either in this or the next session. You do not deny that, even in public. The man that will vote for that bill will break the eighth commandment in any other way, sir!"

"But he will not vote for your corrupt measure, nevertheless, madam!"

exclaimed Mr. Trollop, rising from his seat in a passion.

"Ah, but he will. Sit down again, and let me explain why. Oh, come, don't behave so. It is very unpleasant. Now be good, and you shall have, the missing page of your great speech. Here it is!"--and she displayed a sheet of manuscript.

Mr. Trollop turned immediately back from the threshold. It might have been gladness that flashed into his face; it might have been something else; but at any rate there was much astonishment mixed with it.

"Good! Where did you get it? Give it me!"

"Now there is no hurry. Sit down; sit down and let us talk and be friendly."

The gentleman wavered. Then he said:

"No, this is only a subterfuge. I will go. It is not the missing page."

Laura tore off a couple of lines from the bottom of the sheet.

"Now," she said, "you will know whether this is the handwriting or not. You know it is the handwriting. Now if you will listen, you will know that this must be the list of statistics which was to be the 'nub' of your great effort, and the accompanying blast the beginning of the burst of eloquence which was continued on the next page--and you will recognize that there was where you broke down."

She read the page. Mr. Trollop said:

"This is perfectly astounding. Still, what is all this to me? It is nothing. It does not concern me. The speech is made, and there an end. I did break down for a moment, and in a rather uncomfortable place, since I had led up to those statistics with some grandeur; the hiatus was pleasanter to the House and the galleries than it was to me. But it is no matter now. A week has passed; the jests about it ceased three or four days ago. The, whole thing is a matter of indifference to me, Miss Hawkins."

"But you apologized; and promised the statistics for next day. Why didn't you keep your promise."

"The matter was not of sufficient consequence. The time was gone by to produce an effect with them."

"But I hear that other friends of the Soldiers' Pension Bill desire them very much. I think you ought to let them have them."

"Miss Hawkins, this silly blunder of my copyist evidently has more interest for you than it has for me. I will send my private secretary to you and let him discuss the subject with you at length."

"Did he copy your speech for you?"

"Of course he did. Why all these questions? Tell me--how did you get hold of that page of manuscript? That is the only thing that stirs a passing interest in my mind."

"I'm coming to that." Then she said, much as if she were talking to herself: "It does seem like taking a deal of unnecessary pains, for a body to hire another body to construct a great speech for him and then go and get still another body to copy it before it can be read in the House."

"Miss Hawkins, what do you mean by such talk as that?"

"Why I am sure I mean no harm--no harm to anybody in the world. I am certain that I overheard the Hon. Mr. Buckstone either promise to write your great speech for you or else get some other competent person to do it."

"This is perfectly absurd, madam, perfectly absurd!" and Mr. Trollop affected a laugh of derision.

"Why, the thing has occurred before now. I mean that I have heard that Congressmen have sometimes hired literary grubs to build speeches for them.--Now didn't I overhear a conversation like that I spoke of?"

"Pshaw! Why of course you may have overheard some such jesting nonsense. But would one be in earnest about so farcical a thing?"

"Well if it was only a joke, why did you make a serious matter of it? Why did you get the speech written for you, and then read it in the House without ever having it copied?"

Mr. Trollop did not laugh this time; he seemed seriously perplexed. He said:

"Come, play out your jest, Miss Hawkins. I can't understand what you are contriving--but it seems to entertain you--so please, go on."

"I will, I assure you; but I hope to make the matter entertaining to you, too. Your private secretary never copied your speech."

"Indeed? Really you seem to know my affairs better than I do myself."

"I believe I do. You can't name your own amanuensis, Mr. Trollop."

"That is sad, indeed. Perhaps Miss Hawkins can?"

"Yes, I can. I wrote your speech myself, and you read it from my manuscript. There, now!"

Mr. Trollop did not spring to his feet and smite his brow with his hand while a cold sweat broke out all over him and the color forsook his face--no, he only said, "Good God!" and looked greatly astonished.

Laura handed him her commonplace-book and called his attention to the fact that the handwriting there and the handwriting of this speech were the same. He was shortly convinced. He laid the book aside and said, composedly:

"Well, the wonderful tragedy is done, and it transpires that I am indebted to you for my late eloquence. What of it? What was all this for and what does it amount to after all? What do you propose to do about it?"

"Oh nothing. It is only a bit of pleasantry. When I overheard that conversation I took an early opportunity to ask Mr. Buckstone if he knew of anybody who might want a speech written--I had a friend, and so forth and so on. I was the friend, myself; I thought I might do you a good turn then and depend on you to do me one by and by. I never let Mr. Buckstone have the speech till the last moment, and when you hurried off to the House with it, you did not know there was a missing page, of course, but I did.

"And now perhaps you think that if I refuse to support your bill, you will make a grand exposure?"

"Well I had not thought of that. I only kept back the page for the mere fun of the thing; but since you mention it, I don't know but I might do something if I were angry."

"My dear Miss Hawkins, if you were to give out that you composed my speech, you know very well that people would say it was only your raillery, your fondness for putting a victim in the pillory and amusing the public at his expense. It is too flimsy, Miss Hawkins, for a person of your fine inventive talent--contrive an abler device than that. Come!"

"It is easily done, Mr. Trollop. I will hire a man, and pin this page on his breast, and label it, 'The Missing Fragment of the Hon. Mr. Trollop's Great Speech--which speech was written and composed by Miss Laura Hawkins under a secret understanding for one hundred dollars--and the money has not been paid.' And I will pin round about it notes in my handwriting, which I will procure from prominent friends of mine for the occasion; also your printed speech in the Globe, showing the connection between its bracketed hiatus and my Fragment; and I give you my word of honor that I will stand that human bulletin board in the rotunda of the capitol and make him stay there a week! You see you are premature, Mr. Trollop, the wonderful tragedy is not done yet, by any means. Come, now, doesn't it improve?"

Mr Trollop opened his eyes rather widely at this novel aspect of the case. He got up and walked the floor and gave himself a moment for reflection. Then he stopped and studied Laura's face a while, and ended by saying:

"Well, I am obliged to believe you would be reckless enough to do that."

"Then don't put me to the test, Mr. Trollop. But let's drop the matter. I have had my joke and you've borne the infliction becomingly enough. It spoils a jest to harp on it after one has had one's laugh. I would much rather talk about my bill."

"So would I, now, my clandestine amanuensis. Compared with some other subjects, even your bill is a pleasant topic to discuss."

"Very good indeed! I thought. I could persuade you. Now I am sure you will be generous to the poor negro and vote for that bill."

"Yes, I feel more tenderly toward the oppressed colored man than I did. Shall we bury the hatchet and be good friends and respect each other's little secrets, on condition that I vote Aye on the measure?"

"With all my heart, Mr. Trollop. I give you my word of that."

"It is a bargain. But isn't there something else you could give me, too?"

Laura looked at him inquiringly a moment, and then she comprehended.

"Oh, yes! You may have it now. I haven't any more use for it." She picked up the page of manuscript, but she reconsidered her intention of handing it to him, and said, "But never mind; I will keep it close; no one shall see it; you shall have it as soon as your vote is recorded."

Mr. Trollop looked disappointed. But presently made his adieux, and had got as far as the hall, when something occurred to Laura. She said to herself, "I don't simply want his vote under compulsion--he might vote aye, but work against the bill in secret, for revenge; that man is unscrupulous enough to do anything. I must have his hearty co-operation as well as his vote. There is only one way to get that."

She called him back, and said:

"I value your vote, Mr. Trollop, but I value your influence more. You are able to help a measure along in many ways, if you choose. I want to ask you to work for the bill as well as vote for it."

"It takes so much of one's time, Miss Hawkins--and time is money, you know."

"Yes, I know it is--especially in Congress. Now there is no use in you and I dealing in pretenses and going at matters in round-about ways. We know each other--disguises are nonsense. Let us be plain. I will make it an object to you to work for the bill."

"Don't make it unnecessarily plain, please. There are little proprieties that are best preserved. What do you propose?"

"Well, this." She mentioned the names of several prominent Congressmen.

"Now," said she, "these gentlemen are to vote and work for the bill, simply out of love for the negro--and out of pure generosity I have put in a relative of each as a member of the University incorporation. They will handle a million or so of money, officially, but will receive no salaries. A larger number of statesmen are to vote and work for the bill--also out of love for the negro--gentlemen of but moderate influence, these--and out of pure generosity I am to see that relatives of theirs have positions in the University, with salaries, and good ones, too. You will vote and work for the bill, from mere affection for the negro, and I desire to testify my gratitude becomingly. Make free choice. Have you any friend whom you would like to present with a salaried or unsalaried position in our institution?"

"Well, I have a brother-in-law--"

"That same old brother-in-law, you good unselfish provider! I have heard of him often, through my agents. How regularly he does 'turn up,' to be sure. He could deal with those millions virtuously, and withal with ability, too--but of course you would rather he had a salaried position?"

"Oh, no," said the gentleman, facetiously, "we are very humble, very humble in our desires; we want no money; we labor solely, for our country

and require no reward but the luxury of an applauding conscience. Make him one of those poor hard working unsalaried corporators and let him do every body good with those millions--and go hungry himself! I will try to exert a little influence in favor of the bill."

Arrived at home, Mr. Trollop sat down and thought it all over--something after this fashion: it is about the shape it might have taken if he had spoken it aloud.

"My reputation is getting a little damaged, and I meant to clear it up brilliantly with an exposure of this bill at the supreme moment, and ride back into Congress on the eclat of it; and if I had that bit of manuscript, I would do it yet. It would be more money in my pocket in the end, than my brother-in-law will get out of that incorporatorship, fat as it is. But that sheet of paper is out of my reach--she will never let that get out of her hands. And what a mountain it is! It blocks up my road, completely. She was going to hand it to me, once. Why didn't she! Must be a deep woman. Deep devil! That is what she is; a beautiful devil--and perfectly fearless, too. The idea of her pinning that paper on a man and standing him up in the rotunda looks absurd at a first glance. But she would do it! She is capable of doing anything. I went there hoping she would try to bribe me--good solid capital that would be in the exposure. Well, my prayer was answered; she did try to bribe me; and I made the best of a bad bargain and let her. I am check-mated. I must contrive something fresh to get back to Congress on. Very well; a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush; I will work for the bill--the incorporatorship will be a very good thing."

As soon as Mr. Trollop had taken his leave, Laura ran to Senator Dilworthy and began to speak, but he interrupted her and said distressfully, without even turning from his writing to look at her:

"Only half an hour! You gave it up early, child. However, it was best, it was best--I'm sure it was best--and safest."

"Give it up! I!"

The Senator sprang up, all aglow:

"My child, you can't mean that you--"

"I've made him promise on honor to think about a compromise tonight and come and tell me his decision in the morning."

"Good! There's hope yet that--"

Nonsense, uncle. I've made him engage to let the Tennessee Land bill utterly alone!"

"Impossible! You--"

"I've made him promise to vote with us!"

"INCREDIBLE! Abso--"

"I've made him swear that he'll work for us!"

"PRE - - - POSTEROUS!--Utterly pre--break a window, child, before I suffocate!"

"No matter, it's true anyway. Now we can march into Congress with drums beating and colors flying!"

"Well--well--well. I'm sadly bewildered, sadly bewildered. I can't understand it at all--the most extraordinary woman that ever--it's a great day, it's a great day. There--there--let me put my hand in benediction on this precious head. Ah, my child, the poor negro will bless--"

"Oh bother the poor negro, uncle! Put it in your speech. Good-night, good-bye--we'll marshal our forces and march with the dawn!"

Laura reflected a while, when she was alone, and then fell to laughing, peacefully.

"Everybody works for me,"--so ran her thought. "It was a good idea to make Buckstone lead Mr. Trollop on to get a great speech written for him; and it was a happy part of the same idea for me to copy the speech after Mr. Buckstone had written it, and then keep back a page. Mr. B. was very complimentary to me when Trollop's break-down in the House showed him the object of my mysterious scheme; I think he will say, still finer things when I tell him the triumph the sequel to it has gained for us.

"But what a coward the man was, to believe I would have exposed that page in the rotunda, and so exposed myself. However, I don't know--I don't know. I will think a moment. Suppose he voted no; suppose the bill failed; that is to suppose this stupendous game lost forever, that I have played so desperately for; suppose people came around pitying me--odious! And he could have saved me by his single voice. Yes, I would have exposed him! What would I care for the talk that that would have made about me when I was gone to Europe with Selby and all the world was busy with my history and my dishonor? It would be almost happiness to spite somebody at such a time."

CHAPTER XLIII.

The very next day, sure enough, the campaign opened. In due course, the Speaker of the House reached that Order of Business which is termed "Notices of Bills," and then the Hon. Mr. Buckstone rose in his place and gave notice of a bill "To Found and Incorporate the Knobs Industrial University," and then sat down without saying anything further. The busy gentlemen in the reporters' gallery jotted a line in their note-books, ran to the telegraphic desk in a room which communicated with their own writing-parlor, and then hurried back to their places in the gallery; and by the time they had resumed their seats, the line which they had delivered to the operator had been read in telegraphic offices in towns and cities hundreds of miles away. It was distinguished by frankness of language as well as by brevity:

"The child is born. Buckstone gives notice of the thieving Knobs University job. It is said the noses have been counted and enough votes have been bought to pass it."

For some time the correspondents had been posting their several journals upon the alleged disreputable nature of the bill, and furnishing daily

reports of the Washington gossip concerning it. So the next morning, nearly every newspaper of character in the land assailed the measure and hurled broadsides of invective at Mr. Buckstone. The Washington papers were more respectful, as usual--and conciliatory, also, as usual. They generally supported measures, when it was possible; but when they could not they "deprecated" violent expressions of opinion in other journalistic quarters.

They always deprecated, when there was trouble ahead. However, 'The Washington Daily Love-Feast' hailed the bill with warm approbation. This was Senator Balaam's paper--or rather, "Brother" Balaam, as he was popularly called, for he had been a clergyman, in his day; and he himself and all that he did still emitted an odor of sanctity now that he had diverged into journalism and politics. He was a power in the Congressional prayer meeting, and in all movements that looked to the spread of religion and temperance.

His paper supported the new bill with gushing affection; it was a noble measure; it was a just measure; it was a generous measure; it was a pure measure, and that surely should recommend it in these corrupt times; and finally, if the nature of the bill were not known at all, the 'Love Feast' would support it anyway, and unhesitatingly, for the fact that Senator Dilworthy was the originator of the measure was a guaranty that it contemplated a worthy and righteous work.

Senator Dilworthy was so anxious to know what the New York papers would say about the bill; that he had arranged to have synopses of their editorials telegraphed to him; he could not wait for the papers themselves to crawl along down to Washington by a mail train which has never run over a cow since the road was built; for the reason that it has never been able to overtake one. It carries the usual "cow-catcher" in front of the locomotive, but this is mere ostentation. It ought to be attached to the rear car, where it could do some good; but instead, no provision is made there for the protection of the traveling public, and hence it is not a matter of surprise that cows so frequently climb aboard that train and among the passengers.

The Senator read his dispatches aloud at the breakfast table. Laura was troubled beyond measure at their tone, and said that that sort of comment would defeat the bill; but the Senator said:

"Oh, not at all, not at all, my child. It is just what we want. Persecution is the one thing needful, now--all the other forces are secured. Give us newspaper persecution enough, and we are safe. Vigorous persecution will alone carry a bill sometimes, dear; and when you start with a strong vote in the first place, persecution comes in with double effect. It scares off some of the weak supporters, true, but it soon turns strong ones into stubborn ones. And then, presently, it changes the tide of public opinion. The great public is weak-minded; the great public is sentimental; the great public always turns around and weeps for an odious murderer, and prays for-him, and carries flowers to his prison and besieges the governor with appeals to his clemency, as soon as the papers begin to howl for that man's blood.--In a word, the great putty-hearted public loves to 'gush,' and there is no such darling opportunity to gush as a case of persecution affords."

"Well, uncle, dear; if your theory is right, let us go into raptures, for nobody can ask a heartier persecution than these editorials are furnishing."

"I am not so sure of that, my daughter. I don't entirely like the tone of some of these remarks. They lack vim, they lack venom. Here is one calls it a 'questionable measure.' Bah, there is no strength in that. This one is better; it calls it 'highway robbery.' That sounds something like. But now this one seems satisfied to call it an 'iniquitous scheme'. 'Iniquitous' does not exasperate anybody; it is weak--puerile. The ignorant will imagine it to be intended for a compliment. But this other one--the one I read last--has the true ring: 'This vile, dirty effort to rob the public treasury, by the kites and vultures that now infest the filthy den called Congress'--that is admirable, admirable! We must have more of that sort. But it will come--no fear of that; they're not warmed up, yet. A week from now you'll see."

"Uncle, you and Brother Balaam are bosom friends--why don't you get his paper to persecute us, too?"

"It isn't worth while, my, daughter. His support doesn't hurt a bill. Nobody reads his editorials but himself. But I wish the New York papers would talk a little plainer. It is annoying to have to wait a week for them to warm up. I expected better things at their hands--and time is precious, now."

At the proper hour, according to his previous notice, Mr. Buckstone duly introduced his bill entitled "An Act to Found and Incorporate the Knobs Industrial University," moved its proper reference, and sat down.

The Speaker of the House rattled off this observation:

"Fnoobjectionbilltakuzhlcoixrssoreferred!"

Habitues of the House comprehended that this long, lightning-heeled word signified that if there was no objection, the bill would take the customary course of a measure of its nature, and be referred to the Committee on Benevolent Appropriations, and that it was accordingly so referred. Strangers merely supposed that the Speaker was taking a gargle for some affection of the throat.

The reporters immediately telegraphed the introduction of the bill.--And they added:

"The assertion that the bill will pass was premature. It is said that many favorers of it will desert when the storm breaks upon them from the public press."

The storm came, and during ten days it waxed more and more violent day by day. The great "Negro University Swindle" became the one absorbing topic of conversation throughout the Union. Individuals denounced it, journals denounced it, public meetings denounced it, the pictorial papers caricatured its friends, the whole nation seemed to be growing frantic over it. Meantime the Washington correspondents were sending such telegrams as these abroad in the land; Under date of--

SATURDAY. "Congressmen Jex and Fluke are wavering; it is believed they will desert the execrable bill."

MONDAY. "Jex and Fluke have deserted!"

THURSDAY. "Tubbs and Huffy left the sinking ship last night"

Later on:

"Three desertions. The University thieves are getting scared, though they will not own it."

Later:

"The leaders are growing stubborn--they swear they can carry it, but it is now almost certain that they no longer have a majority!"

After a day or two of reluctant and ambiguous telegrams:

"Public sentiment seems changing, a trifle in favor of the bill --but only a trifle."

And still later:

"It is whispered that the Hon. Mr. Trollop has gone over to the pirates. It is probably a canard. Mr. Trollop has all along been the bravest and most efficient champion of virtue and the people against the bill, and the report is without doubt a shameless invention."

Next day:

"With characteristic treachery, the truckling and pusillanimous reptile, Crippled-Speech Trollop, has gone over to the enemy. It is contended, now, that he has been a friend to the bill, in secret, since the day it was introduced, and has had bankable reasons for being so; but he himself declares that he has gone over because the malignant persecution of the bill by the newspapers caused him to study its provisions with more care than he had previously done, and this close examination revealed the fact that the measure is one in every way worthy of support. (Pretty thin!) It cannot be denied that this desertion has had a damaging effect. Jex and Fluke have returned to their iniquitous allegiance, with six or eight others of lesser calibre, and it is reported and believed that Tubbs and Huffy are ready to go back. It is feared that the University swindle is stronger to-day than it has ever been before."

Later-midnight:

"It is said that the committee will report the bill back to-morrow. Both sides are marshaling their forces, and the fight on this bill is evidently going to be the hottest of the session.--All Washington is boiling."

CHAPTER XLIV.

"It's easy enough for another fellow to talk," said Harry, despondingly, after he had put Philip in possession of his view of the case. "It's easy enough to say 'give her up,' if you don't care for her. What am I going to do to give her up?"

It seemed to Harry that it was a situation requiring some active measures. He couldn't realize that he had fallen hopelessly in love without some rights accruing to him for the possession of the object of

his passion. Quiet resignation under relinquishment of any thing he wanted was not in his line. And when it appeared to him that his surrender of Laura would be the withdrawal of the one barrier that kept her from ruin, it was unreasonable to expect that he could see how to give her up.

Harry had the most buoyant confidence in his own projects always; he saw everything connected with himself in a large way and in rosy lines. This predominance of the imagination over the judgment gave that appearance of exaggeration to his conversation and to his communications with regard to himself, which sometimes conveyed the impression that he was not speaking the truth. His acquaintances had been known to say that they invariably allowed a half for shrinkage in his statements, and held the other half under advisement for confirmation.

Philip in this case could not tell from Harry's story exactly how much encouragement Laura had given him, nor what hopes he might justly have of winning her. He had never seen him desponding before. The "brag" appeared to be all taken out of him, and his airy manner only asserted itself now and then in a comical imitation of its old self.

Philip wanted time to look about him before he decided what to do. He was not familiar with Washington, and it was difficult to adjust his feelings and perceptions to its peculiarities. Coming out of the sweet sanity of the Bolton household, this was by contrast the maddest Vanity Fair one could conceive. It seemed to him a feverish, unhealthy atmosphere in which lunacy would be easily developed. He fancied that everybody attached to himself an exaggerated importance, from the fact of being at the national capital, the center of political influence, the fountain of patronage, preferment, jobs and opportunities.

People were introduced to each other as from this or that state, not from cities or towns, and this gave a largeness to their representative feeling. All the women talked politics as naturally and glibly as they talk fashion or literature elsewhere. There was always some exciting topic at the Capitol, or some huge slander was rising up like a miasmatic exhalation from the Potomac, threatening to settle no one knew exactly where. Every other person was an aspirant for a place, or, if he had one, for a better place, or more pay; almost every other one had some claim or interest or remedy to urge; even the women were all advocates for the advancement of some person, and they violently espoused or denounced this or that measure as it would affect some relative, acquaintance or friend.

Love, travel, even death itself, waited on the chances of the dies daily thrown in the two Houses, and the committee rooms there. If the measure went through, love could afford to ripen into marriage, and longing for foreign travel would have fruition; and it must have been only eternal hope springing in the breast that kept alive numerous old claimants who for years and years had besieged the doors of Congress, and who looked as if they needed not so much an appropriation of money as six feet of ground. And those who stood so long waiting for success to bring them death were usually those who had a just claim.

Representing states and talking of national and even international affairs, as familiarly as neighbors at home talk of poor crops and the extravagance of their ministers, was likely at first to impose upon Philip as to the importance of the people gathered here.

There was a little newspaper editor from Phil's native town, the assistant on a Peddletonian weekly, who made his little annual joke about the "first egg laid on our table," and who was the menial of every tradesman in the village and under bonds to him for frequent "puffs," except the undertaker, about whose employment he was recklessly facetious. In Washington he was an important man, correspondent, and clerk of two house committees, a "worker" in politics, and a confident critic of every woman and every man in Washington. He would be a consul no doubt by and by, at some foreign port, of the language of which he was ignorant--though if ignorance of language were a qualification he might have been a consul at home. His easy familiarity with great men was beautiful to see, and when Philip learned what a tremendous underground influence this little ignoramus had, he no longer wondered at the queer appointments and the queerer legislation.

Philip was not long in discovering that people in Washington did not differ much from other people; they had the same meannesses, generousities, and tastes: A Washington boarding house had the odor of a boarding house the world over.

Col. Sellers was as unchanged as any one Philip saw whom he had known elsewhere. Washington appeared to be the native element of this man. His pretensions were equal to any he encountered there. He saw nothing in its society that equalled that of Hawkeye, he sat down to no table that could not be unfavorably contrasted with his own at home; the most airy scheme inflated in the hot air of the capital only reached in magnitude some of his lesser fancies, the by-play of his constructive imagination.

"The country is getting along very well," he said to Philip, "but our public men are too timid. What we want is more money. I've told Boutwell so. Talk about basing the currency on gold; you might as well base it on pork. Gold is only one product. Base it on everything! You've got to do something for the West. How am I to move my crops? We must have improvements. Grant's got the idea. We want a canal from the James River to the Mississippi. Government ought to build it."

It was difficult to get the Colonel off from these large themes when he was once started, but Philip brought the conversation round to Laura and her reputation in the City.

"No," he said, "I haven't noticed much. We've been so busy about this University. It will make Laura rich with the rest of us, and she has done nearly as much as if she were a man. She has great talent, and will make a big match. I see the foreign ministers and that sort after her. Yes, there is talk, always will be about a pretty woman so much in public as she is. Tough stories come to me, but I put'em away. 'Taint likely one of Si Hawkins's children would do that--for she is the same as a child of his. I told her, though, to go slow," added the Colonel, as if that mysterious admonition from him would set everything right.

"Do you know anything about a Col. Selby?"

"Know all about him. Fine fellow. But he's got a wife; and I told him, as a friend, he'd better sheer off from Laura. I reckon he thought better of it and did."

But Philip was not long in learning the truth. Courted as Laura was by a certain class and still admitted into society, that, nevertheless, buzzed

with disreputable stories about her, she had lost character with the best people. Her intimacy with Selby was open gossip, and there were winks and thrustings of the tongue in any group of men when she passed by. It was clear enough that Harry's delusion must be broken up, and that no such feeble obstacle as his passion could interpose would turn Laura from her fate. Philip determined to see her, and put himself in possession of the truth, as he suspected it, in order to show Harry his folly.

Laura, after her last conversation with Harry, had a new sense of her position. She had noticed before the signs of a change in manner towards her, a little less respect perhaps from men, and an avoidance by women. She had attributed this latter partly to jealousy of her, for no one is willing to acknowledge a fault in himself when a more agreeable motive can be found for the estrangement of his acquaintances. But now, if society had turned on her, she would defy it. It was not in her nature to shrink. She knew she had been wronged, and she knew that she had no remedy.

What she heard of Col. Selby's proposed departure alarmed her more than anything else, and she calmly determined that if he was deceiving her the second time it should be the last. Let society finish the tragedy if it liked; she was indifferent what came after. At the first opportunity, she charged Selby with his intention to abandon her. He unblushingly denied it.

He had not thought of going to Europe. He had only been amusing himself with Sellers' schemes. He swore that as soon as she succeeded with her bill, he would fly with her to any part of the world.

She did not quite believe him, for she saw that he feared her, and she began to suspect that his were the protestations of a coward to gain time. But she showed him no doubts.

She only watched his movements day by day, and always held herself ready to act promptly.

When Philip came into the presence of this attractive woman, he could not realize that she was the subject of all the scandal he had heard. She received him with quite the old Hawkeye openness and cordiality, and fell to talking at once of their little acquaintance there; and it seemed impossible that he could ever say to her what he had come determined to say. Such a man as Philip has only one standard by which to judge women.

Laura recognized that fact no doubt. The better part of her woman's nature saw it. Such a man might, years ago, not now, have changed her nature, and made the issue of her life so different, even after her cruel abandonment. She had a dim feeling of this, and she would like now to stand well with him. The spark of truth and honor that was left in her was elicited by his presence. It was this influence that governed her conduct in this interview.

"I have come," said Philip in his direct manner, "from my friend Mr. Brierly. You are not ignorant of his feeling towards you?"

"Perhaps not."

"But perhaps you do not know, you who have so much admiration, how sincere and overmastering his love is for you?" Philip would not have spoken so plainly, if he had in mind anything except to draw from Laura

something that would end Harry's passion.

"And is sincere love so rare, Mr. Sterling?" asked Laura, moving her foot a little, and speaking with a shade of sarcasm.

"Perhaps not in Washington," replied Philip,--tempted into a similar tone. "Excuse my bluntness," he continued, "but would the knowledge of his love; would his devotion, make any difference to you in your Washington life?"

"In respect to what?" asked Laura quickly.

"Well, to others. I won't equivocate--to Col. Selby?"

Laura's face flushed with anger, or shame; she looked steadily at Philip and began,

"By what right, sir,--"

"By the right of friendship," interrupted Philip stoutly. "It may matter little to you. It is everything to him. He has a Quixotic notion that you would turn back from what is before you for his sake. You cannot be ignorant of what all the city is talking of." Philip said this determinedly and with some bitterness.

It was a full minute before Laura spoke. Both had risen, Philip as if to go, and Laura in suppressed excitement. When she spoke her voice was very unsteady, and she looked down.

"Yes, I know. I perfectly understand what you mean. Mr. Brierly is nothing--simply nothing. He is a moth singled, that is all--the trifler with women thought he was a wasp. I have no pity for him, not the least. You may tell him not to make a fool of himself, and to keep away. I say this on your account, not his. You are not like him. It is enough for me that you want it so. Mr. Sterling," she continued, looking up; and there were tears in her eyes that contradicted the hardness of her language, "you might not pity him if you knew my history; perhaps you would not wonder at some things you hear. No; it is useless to ask me why it must be so. You can't make a life over--society wouldn't let you if you would--and mine must be lived as it is. There, sir, I'm not offended; but it is useless for you to say anything more."

Philip went away with his heart lightened about Harry, but profoundly saddened by the glimpse of what this woman might have been. He told Harry all that was necessary of the conversation--she was bent on going her own way, he had not the ghost of a chance--he was a fool, she had said, for thinking he had.

And Harry accepted it meekly, and made up his own mind that Philip didn't know much about women.

CHAPTER XLV.

The galleries of the House were packed, on the momentous day, not because the reporting of an important bill back by a committee was a thing to be excited about, if the bill were going to take the ordinary course

afterward; it would be like getting excited over the empaneling of a coroner's jury in a murder case, instead of saving up one's emotions for the grander occasion of the hanging of the accused, two years later, after all the tedious forms of law had been gone through with.

But suppose you understand that this coroner's jury is going to turn out to be a vigilance committee in disguise, who will hear testimony for an hour and then hang the murderer on the spot? That puts a different aspect upon the matter. Now it was whispered that the legitimate forms of procedure usual in the House, and which keep a bill hanging along for days and even weeks, before it is finally passed upon, were going to be overruled, in this case, and short work made of the measure; and so, what was beginning as a mere inquest might, torn out to be something very different.

In the course of the day's business the Order of "Reports of Committees" was finally reached and when the weary crowds heard that glad announcement issue from the Speaker's lips they ceased to fret at the dragging delay, and plucked up spirit. The Chairman of the Committee on Benevolent Appropriations rose and made his report, and just then a blue-uniformed brass-mounted little page put a note into his hand.

It was from Senator Dilworthy, who had appeared upon the floor of the House for a moment and flitted away again:

"Everybody expects a grand assault in force; no doubt you believe, as I certainly do, that it is the thing to do; we are strong, and everything is hot for the contest. Trollop's espousal of our cause has immensely helped us and we grow in power constantly. Ten of the opposition were called away from town about noon, (but--so it is said--only for one day). Six others are sick, but expect to be about again tomorrow or next day, a friend tells me. A bold onslaught is worth trying. Go for a suspension of the rules! You will find we can swing a two-thirds vote--I am perfectly satisfied of it. The Lord's truth will prevail.

"DILWORTHY."

Mr. Buckstone had reported the bills from his committee, one by one, leaving the bill to the last. When the House had voted upon the acceptance or rejection of the report upon all but it, and the question now being upon its disposal--Mr. Buckstone begged that the House would give its attention to a few remarks which he desired to make. His committee had instructed him to report the bill favorably; he wished to explain the nature of the measure, and thus justify the committee's action; the hostility roused by the press would then disappear, and the bill would shine forth in its true and noble character. He said that its provisions were simple. It incorporated the Knobs Industrial University, locating it in East Tennessee, declaring it open to all persons without distinction of sex, color or religion, and committing its management to a board of perpetual trustees, with power to fill vacancies in their own number. It provided for the erection of certain buildings for the University, dormitories, lecture-halls, museums, libraries, laboratories, work-shops, furnaces, and mills. It provided also for the purchase of sixty-five thousand acres of land, (fully described) for the purposes of the University, in the Knobs of East Tennessee. And it appropriated [blank] dollars for the purchase of the Land, which should be the property of the national trustees in trust for the uses named.

Every effort had been made to secure the refusal of the whole amount of

the property of the Hawkins heirs in the Knobs, some seventy-five thousand acres Mr. Buckstone said. But Mr. Washington Hawkins (one of the heirs) objected. He was, indeed, very reluctant to sell any part of the land at any price; and indeed--this reluctance was justifiable when one considers how constantly and how greatly the property is rising in value.

What the South needed, continued Mr. Buckstone, was skilled labor. Without that it would be unable to develop its mines, build its roads, work to advantage and without great waste its fruitful land, establish manufactures or enter upon a prosperous industrial career. Its laborers were almost altogether unskilled. Change them into intelligent, trained workmen, and you increased at once the capital, the resources of the entire south, which would enter upon a prosperity hitherto unknown. In five years the increase in local wealth would not only reimburse the government for the outlay in this appropriation, but pour untold wealth into the treasury.

This was the material view, and the least important in the honorable gentleman's opinion. [Here he referred to some notes furnished him by Senator Dilworthy, and then continued.] God had given us the care of these colored millions. What account should we render to Him of our stewardship? We had made them free. Should we leave them ignorant? We had cast them upon their own resources. Should we leave them without tools? We could not tell what the intentions of Providence are in regard to these peculiar people, but our duty was plain. The Knobs Industrial University would be a vast school of modern science and practice, worthy of a great nation. It would combine the advantages of Zurich, Freiburg, Creuzot and the Sheffield Scientific. Providence had apparently reserved and set apart the Knobs of East Tennessee for this purpose. What else were they for? Was it not wonderful that for more than thirty years, over a generation, the choicest portion of them had remained in one family, untouched, as if, separated for some great use!

It might be asked why the government should buy this land, when it had millions of yes, more than the railroad companies desired, which, it might devote to this purpose? He answered, that the government had no such tract of land as this. It had nothing comparable to it for the purposes of the University: This was to be a school of mining, of engineering, of the working of metals, of chemistry, zoology, botany, manufactures, agriculture, in short of all the complicated industries that make a state great. There was no place for the location of such a school like the Knobs of East Tennessee. The hills abounded in metals of all sorts, iron in all its combinations, copper, bismuth, gold and silver in small quantities, platinum he--believed, tin, aluminium; it was covered with forests and strange plants; in the woods were found the coon, the opossum, the fox, the deer and many other animals who roamed in the domain of natural history; coal existed in enormous quantity and no doubt oil; it was such a place for the practice of agricultural experiments that any student who had been successful there would have an easy task in any other portion of the country.

No place offered equal facilities for experiments in mining, metallurgy, engineering. He expected to live to see the day, when the youth of the south would resort to its mines, its workshops, its laboratories, its furnaces and factories for practical instruction in all the great industrial pursuits.

A noisy and rather ill-natured debate followed, now, and lasted hour

after hour. The friends of the bill were instructed by the leaders to make no effort to check it; it was deemed better strategy to tire out the opposition; it was decided to vote down every proposition to adjourn, and so continue the sitting into the night; opponents might desert, then, one by one and weaken their party, for they had no personal stake in the bill.

Sunset came, and still the fight went on; the gas was lit, the crowd in the galleries began to thin, but the contest continued; the crowd returned, by and by, with hunger and thirst appeased, and aggravated the hungry and thirsty House by looking contented and comfortable; but still the wrangle lost nothing of its bitterness. Recesses were moved plaintively by the opposition, and invariably voted down by the University army.

At midnight the House presented a spectacle calculated to interest a stranger. The great galleries were still thronged--though only with men, now; the bright colors that had made them look like hanging gardens were gone, with the ladies. The reporters' gallery, was merely occupied by one or two watchful sentinels of the quill-driving guild; the main body cared nothing for a debate that had dwindled to a mere vapping of dull speakers and now and then a brief quarrel over a point of order; but there was an unusually large attendance of journalists in the reporters' waiting-room, chatting, smoking, and keeping on the 'qui vive' for the general irruption of the Congressional volcano that must come when the time was ripe for it. Senator Dilworthy and Philip were in the Diplomatic Gallery; Washington sat in the public gallery, and Col. Sellers was, not far away. The Colonel had been flying about the corridors and button-holing Congressmen all the evening, and believed that he had accomplished a world of valuable service; but fatigue was telling upon him, now, and he was quiet and speechless--for once. Below, a few Senators lounged upon the sofas set apart for visitors, and talked with idle Congressmen. A dreary member was speaking; the presiding officer was nodding; here and there little knots of members stood in the aisles, whispering together; all about the House others sat in all the various attitudes that express weariness; some, tilted back, had one or more legs disposed upon their desks; some sharpened pencils indolently; some scribbled aimlessly; some yawned and stretched; a great many lay upon their breasts upon the desks, sound asleep and gently snoring. The flooding gaslight from the fancifully wrought roof poured down upon the tranquil scene. Hardly a sound disturbed the stillness, save the monotonous eloquence of the gentleman who occupied the floor. Now and then a warrior of the opposition broke down under the pressure, gave it up, and went home.

Mr. Buckstone began to think it might be safe, now, to "proceed to business." He consulted with Trollop and one or two others. Senator Dilworthy descended to the floor of the House and they went to meet him. After a brief comparison of notes, the Congressmen sought their seats and sent pages about the House with messages to friends. These latter instantly roused up, yawned, and began to look alert. The moment the floor was unoccupied, Mr. Buckstone rose, with an injured look, and said it was evident that the opponents of the bill were merely talking against time, hoping in this unbecoming way to tire out the friends of the measure and so defeat it. Such conduct might be respectable enough in a village debating society, but it was trivial among statesmen, it was out of place in so august an assemblage as the House of Representatives of the United States. The friends of the bill had been not only willing that its opponents should express their opinions, but had strongly

desired it. They courted the fullest and freest discussion; but it seemed to him that this fairness was but illy appreciated, since gentlemen were capable of taking advantage of it for selfish and unworthy ends. This trifling had gone far enough. He called for the question.

The instant Mr. Buckstone sat down, the storm burst forth. A dozen gentlemen sprang to their feet.

"Mr. Speaker!"

"Mr. Speaker!"

"Mr. Speaker!"

"Order! Order! Order! Question! Question!"

The sharp blows of the Speaker's gavel rose above the din.

The "previous question," that hated gag, was moved and carried. All debate came to a sudden end, of course. Triumph No. 1.

Then the vote was taken on the adoption of the report and it carried by a surprising majority.

Mr. Buckstone got the floor again and moved that the rules be suspended and the bill read a first time.

Mr. Trollop--"Second the motion!"

The Speaker--"It is moved and--"

Clamor of Voices. "Move we adjourn! Second the motion! Adjourn! Adjourn! Order! Order!"

The Speaker, (after using his gavel vigorously)--"It is moved and seconded that the House do now adjourn. All those in favor--"

Voices--"Division! Division! Ayes and nays! Ayes and nays!"

It was decided to vote upon the adjournment by ayes and nays. This was in earnest. The excitement was furious. The galleries were in commotion in an instant, the reporters swarmed to their places. Idling members of the House flocked to their seats, nervous gentlemen sprang to their feet, pages flew hither and thither, life and animation were visible everywhere, all the long ranks of faces in the building were kindled.

"This thing decides it!" thought Mr. Buckstone; "but let the fight proceed."

The voting began, and every sound ceased but the calling of the names and the "Aye!" "No!" "No!" "Aye!" of the responses. There was not a movement in the House; the people seemed to hold their breath.

The voting ceased, and then there was an interval of dead silence while the clerk made up his count. There was a two-thirds vote on the University side--and two over.

The Speaker--"The rules are suspended, the motion is carried--first reading of the bill!"

By one impulse the galleries broke forth into stormy applause, and even some of the members of the House were not wholly able to restrain their feelings. The Speaker's gavel came to the rescue and his clear voice followed:

"Order, gentlemen--! The House will come to order! If spectators offend again, the Sergeant-at-arms will clear the galleries!"

Then he cast his eyes aloft and gazed at some object attentively for a moment. All eyes followed the direction of the Speaker's, and then there was a general titter. The Speaker said:

"Let the Sergeant-at Arms inform the gentleman that his conduct is an infringement of the dignity of the House--and one which is not warranted by the state of the weather." Poor Sellers was the culprit. He sat in the front seat of the gallery, with his arms and his tired body overflowing the balustrade--sound asleep, dead to all excitements, all disturbances. The fluctuations of the Washington weather had influenced his dreams, perhaps, for during the recent tempest of applause he had hoisted his gingham umbrella, and calmly gone on with his slumbers. Washington Hawkins had seen the act, but was not near enough at hand to save his friend, and no one who was near enough desired to spoil the effect. But a neighbor stirred up the Colonel, now that the House had its eye upon him, and the great speculator furlled his tent like the Arab. He said:

"Bless my soul, I'm so absent-minded when I, get to thinking! I never wear an umbrella in the house--did anybody 'notice it'? What-asleep? Indeed? And did you wake me sir? Thank you--thank you very much indeed. It might have fallen out of my hands and been injured. Admirable article, sir--present from a friend in Hong Kong; one doesn't come across silk like that in this country--it's the real--Young Hyson, I'm told."

By this time the incident was forgotten, for the House was at war again. Victory was almost in sight, now, and the friends of the bill threw themselves into their work with enthusiasm. They soon moved and carried its second reading, and after a strong, sharp fight, carried a motion to go into Committee of the whole. The Speaker left his place, of course, and a chairman was appointed.

Now the contest raged hotter than ever--for the authority that compels order when the House sits as a House, is greatly diminished when it sits as Committee. The main fight came upon the filling of the blanks with the sum to be appropriated for the purchase of the land, of course.

Buckstone--"Mr. Chairman, I move you, sir, that the words 'three millions of' be inserted."

Mr. Hadley--"Mr. Chairman, I move that the words two and a half dollars be inserted."

Mr. Clawson--"Mr. Chairman, I move the insertion of the words five and twenty cents, as representing the true value of this barren and isolated tract of desolation."

The question, according to rule, was taken upon the smallest sum first. It was lost.

Then upon the next smallest sum. Lost, also.

And then upon the three millions. After a vigorous battle that lasted a considerable time, this motion was carried.

Then, clause by clause the bill was read, discussed, and amended in trifling particulars, and now the Committee rose and reported.

The moment the House had resumed its functions and received the report, Mr. Buckstone moved and carried the third reading of the bill.

The same bitter war over the sum to be paid was fought over again, and now that the ayes and nays could be called and placed on record, every man was compelled to vote by name on the three millions, and indeed on every paragraph of the bill from the enacting clause straight through. But as before, the friends of the measure stood firm and voted in a solid body every time, and so did its enemies.

The supreme moment was come, now, but so sure was the result that not even a voice was raised to interpose an adjournment. The enemy were totally demoralized. The bill was put upon its final passage almost without dissent, and the calling of the ayes and nays began. When it was ended the triumph was complete--the two-thirds vote held good, and a veto was impossible, as far as the House was concerned!

Mr. Buckstone resolved that now that the nail was driven home, he would clinch it on the other side and make it stay forever. He moved a reconsideration of the vote by which the bill had passed. The motion was lost, of course, and the great Industrial University act was an accomplished fact as far as it was in the power of the House of Representatives to make it so.

There was no need to move an adjournment. The instant the last motion was decided, the enemies of the University rose and flocked out of the Hall, talking angrily, and its friends flocked after them jubilant and congratulatory. The galleries disgorged their burden, and presently the house was silent and deserted.

When Col. Sellers and Washington stepped out of the building they were surprised to find that the daylight was old and the sun well up. Said the Colonel:

"Give me your hand, my boy! You're all right at last! You're a millionaire! At least you're going to be. The thing is dead sure. Don't you bother about the Senate. Leave me and Dilworthy to take care of that. Run along home, now, and tell Laura. Lord, it's magnificent news--perfectly magnificent! Run, now. I'll telegraph my wife. She must come here and help me build a house. Everything's all right now!"

Washington was so dazed by his good fortune and so bewildered by the gaudy pageant of dreams that was already trailing its long ranks through his brain, that he wandered he knew not where, and so loitered by the way that when at last he reached home he woke to a sudden annoyance in the fact that his news must be old to Laura, now, for of course Senator Dilworthy must have already been home and told her an hour before. He knocked at her door, but there was no answer.

"That is like the Duchess," said he. "Always cool; a body can't excite her--can't keep her excited, anyway. Now she has gone off to sleep again,

as comfortably as if she were used to picking up a million dollars every day or two"

Then he went to bed. But he could not sleep; so he got up and wrote a long, rapturous letter to Louise, and another to his mother. And he closed both to much the same effect:

"Laura will be queen of America, now, and she will be applauded, and honored and petted by the whole nation. Her name will be in every one's mouth more than ever, and how they will court her and quote her bright speeches. And mine, too, I suppose; though they do that more already, than they really seem to deserve. Oh, the world is so bright, now, and so cheery; the clouds are all gone, our long struggle is ended, our troubles are all over. Nothing can ever make us unhappy any more. You dear faithful ones will have the reward of your patient waiting now. How father's Wisdom is proven at last! And how I repent me, that there have been times when I lost faith and said, the blessing he stored up for us a tedious generation ago was but a long-drawn curse, a blight upon us all. But everything is well, now--we are done with poverty, sad toil, weariness and heart-break; all the world is filled with sunshine."

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