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Jimmy Grayson

Six Short Stories

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Jimmy Grayson

Six Short Stories

by Joseph A. Altsheler



Preface

This book contains six short stories by Joseph A. Altsheler.

Each book has as one on its chief characters Jimmy Grayson, who will be familiar to many Altsheler fans as “The Candidate” in the novel of the same name.

Five of these stories went on to be grafted into “The Candidate” novel. One story, however is unique in that it never appeared anywhere else except as the short story you read here—namely, “A Dawn in the Desert.”



His Greatest Speech

It was the Candidate's eighth speech that day, but Harley, the correspondent of the New York Gazette, who was in an analytical mood, could see no decrease either in his energy or spontaneity of thought and expression.

Grayson, the Candidate, was a tall, powerfully built man, with a broad, smoothly shaven, open, and singularly attractive face. They had started at daylight that morning, hurrying across the monotonous Western plains, in a dusty and uncomfortable car, stopping for a half-hour speech here, then racing for another at a second little village, and then a third race and a third speech, and so on all through the day and far into the darkness, sometimes after midnight. Nor was this the first day of such labors; it had been so week after week. But there was no sign to tell of it on the face of the Candidate save a slight redness around the edge of the eyelids.

The village in which Grayson was speaking was a tiny place of twelve or fifteen houses, all square, unadorned, and ugly, standing in the centre of an illimitable prairie that rolled away on either side exactly like the waves of a sea, and with the same monotony. It was a weather-beaten gathering. The prairie winds are not good for the complexion, and the cheeks of these people were brown, not red. On the outskirts of the crowd, still sitting on their ponies, were cowboys who had ridden sixty miles across the Wyoming border to hear Grayson speak. They were dressed exactly like the cowboys of the pictures that Harley had seen in magazine stories of the Western plains. They wore the sombrero and leggings and leather belts, but there was no disorder, no cursing, no shouting nor yelling. This was a phase that had passed.

They heard the Candidate tell of mighty corporations, of a vague and distant place called Wall Street, where fat men with soft white fingers and pouches under their eyes, sat in red-carpeted offices and pulled little but very strong strings that made farmers on the Western plains two

thousand miles away dance like jumping-jacks, just as the fat men wished, and just when they wished. These fat men were allied with others in Europe, pouchy-eyed and smooth-fingered like themselves, and it was their object to own all the money-bags of the world, and gather all the profits of the world's labor. Harley, watching these people, saw a spark appear in their eyes many times, but it was always brightest at the mention of Wall Street. That both speaker and those to whom his words were spoken were thoroughly sincere, he did not doubt for a moment.



Watching the train disappear

Grayson ceased, the engine blew the starting

signal, the Candidate and the correspondent swung aboard, and off they went. Harley looked back, and as long as he could see the station the little crowd on the lone prairie was still watching the disappearing train. There was something pathetic in the sight of these people following with their eyes until the last moment the man whom they considered their particular champion.

It was but an ordinary train of day cars, the red plush of the seats now whitened by the prairie dust, and it was used in common by the Candidate, the little flock of correspondents, and a dozen politicians, the last chiefly committeemen or their friends, one being the Governor of the State through which they were then travelling.

It was not yet daylight when they were awakened for the start of a record-breaking day. A cold wind moaned around the hamlet as they ate their breakfast, and then hastened, valise in hand and still half asleep, to the train, which stood steam up and ready to be off. They found several men already on board, and Churchill, when he saw them, uttered the brief word

“Natives!” They were typical men of the plains, thin, dry, and weather-beaten, and the correspondents at first paid but little attention to them. It was common enough for some local committeemen to take along a number of friends for a half-day or so, in order that they might have a chance to gratify their curiosity and show their admiration for the Candidate.

But the attention of Harley was attracted presently by one of the strangers, a smallish man of middle age, with a weak jaw, and a look curiously compounded of eagerness and depression.

The man’s eye met Harley’s, and encouraged by his friendly look, he crossed the aisle and spoke to the correspondent.

“You are one of them newspaper fellers that travels with Grayson, ain’t you?” he asked.

Harley admitted the charge. “And you see him every day?” continued the little man, admiringly.

“Many times a day.”

“My! My! Jest to think of your comin’ away out here to take down what our Jimmy Grayson

says, so them fellers in New York can read it! I'll bet he makes Wall Street shake. I wish I was like you, mister, and could be right alongside Jimmy Grayson every day for weeks and weeks, and could hear every word he said while he was poundin' them fellers in Wall Street who are ruinin' our country. He's the greatest man in the world. Do you reckon I could get to speak to him, and jest tech his hand?"

“Why, certainly,” replied Harley. He was moved by the little man's childlike and absolute faith and his reverence for Jimmy Grayson as



a demi- A cordial reception
god. It was not without pathos, and Harley at once took him into the next car and introduced him to Grayson, who received him with the natural cordiality that never deserted him. Plover, the little man said was his name—William Plover, of Kalapoosa, Choctaw County. He regarded Grayson with awe, and, after the handshake, did not speak. Indeed, he seemed to wish no more, and made himself still smaller in a corner, where he listened attentively to everything that Grayson said.

He also stood in the front row at each stopping-place, his eyes fixed on Grayson's face while the latter made his speech. Grayson by-and-by began to notice him there. It is often a habit with those who have to speak much in public to fix the eye on some especially interested auditor and talk to him directly. It assists in a sort of concentration, and gives the orator a willing target.

Grayson now spoke straight to Plover, and Harley watched how the little man's emotions, as shown in his face, reflected in every part the

orator's address. There was actual fire in his eyes whenever Grayson mentioned that ogre, Wall Street, and tears rose when the speaker depicted the bad condition of the Western farmer.

“Wouldn't I like to go on to Washington with Jimmy Grayson when he takes charge of the government,” exclaimed Plover to Harley when this speech was finished—“not to take a hand myself, but jest to see him make things hum! Won't he make them fat fellers in Wall Street squeal! He'll have the Robber Barons squirmin' on the griddle pretty quick, an' wheat 'll go straight to a dollar a bushel, sure! I can see it now!”

His exultation and delight lasted all the morning, but in the afternoon the depressed, crushed feeling which Harley had noticed at first in his look seemed to get control.

Although his interest in Grayson's speeches and his devout admiration did not decrease, Plover's melancholy grew, and Harley by-and-by learned the cause of it from another man, somewhat similar in aspect, but larger of figure and stronger of face.

“To tell you the truth, mister,” said the man, with the easy freedom of the West, “Billy Plover—and my cousin he is, twice removed—my name’s Sandidge—is runnin’ away.”

“Running away,” said Harley, in surprise. “Where’s he running to, and what’s he running from?”

“Where he’s runnin’ to, I don’t know—California, or Washington, or Oregon, I guess. But I know mighty well what he’s runnin’ away from; it’s his wife.”

“Ah, a family trouble,” said Harley, whose delicacy would have caused him to refrain from asking more. But the garrulous cousin rambled on.

“It’s a trouble and it ain’t a trouble,” he continued. “It’s the weather and the crops, or maybe because Billy ain’t had no weather nor no crops either. You see, he’s lived for the last ten years on a quarter-section out near Kalapoosa with his wife, Susan, a good woman and a mighty hard worker, but the rain’s been mighty light for three seasons, and Billy’s wheat has failed every

time. It's kinder got on his temper, and as they ain't got any children to take care of, Billy, he's been takin' to politics. Got an idea that he can speak, though he can't, worth shucks, and thinks he's got a mission to whack Wall Street, though I ain't sure but what Wall Street don't deserve it. Susan says he ain't got any business in politics, that he ought to leave that to better men, an' stay an' wrestle with the ground and the weather. So that made them take to spattin'."

"And the upshot?"

"Waal, the upshot was that Billy said he could stand it no longer. So last night he raked up half the spare cash, leavin' the rest and the farm and stock to Susan, an' he loped out. But first he said he had to hear Jimmy Grayson, who is mighty nigh a whole team of prophets to him, and as Jimmy's goin' West, right on his way, he's come along. But tonight, at Jimmy's last stoppin'-place, he leaves us and takes a train straight to the coast. I'm sorry, because if Susan had time to see him and talk it over—you see, she's the man of the two—the whole thing would blow over, and they'd be back on the farm, workin' hard, and

with good times ahead.”

Harley was moved by this pathetic little tragedy of the plains, the result of loneliness and hard times preying upon the tempers of two people. “Poor devil,” he thought. “It’s as his cousin says; if Susan could only be face to face with him for five minutes, he’d drop his foolish idea of running away, and go home.”

Then of that thought was born unto him a great idea, and he immediately hunted up the cousin again.

“Is Kalapoosa a station on the telegraph line?” he asked.

“Oh yes.”

“Would a telegram to that point be delivered to the Plover farm?”

“Yes. Why, what’s up?”

“Nothing; I just wanted to know. Now can you tell me what time to-night, after our arrival, a man may take a train for the coast from Weeping Water, our last stop?”

“We’re due at Weeping Water,” replied the

cousin, “at eleven to-night, but I cal’late it ’ll be nigher twelve when we strike the town. You see, this is a special train, runnin’ on any old time, an’ it’s liable now and then to get laid out a half an hour or more. But anyhow we ought to beat the Denver Express, which is due at 12.30 in the mornin’ and stops ten minutes at the water-tank. It connects at Denver with the Frisco Express, an’ I guess it’s the train that Billy will take.”

“Does the Denver Express stop at Kalapoosa?”

“Yes. Kalapoosa ain’t nothin’ but a little bit of a place, but the Pawnee branch line comes in there, and the express gets some passengers off it. Say, mister, what’s up?”

But Harley evaded a direct answer, having now all the information he wished. He went back to the next car and wrote this despatch:

Susan Plover, Kalapoosa:

Take to-day’s Denver Express and get off to-night at Weeping Water. You will find me at Grayson’s speaking, standing just in front of him. Don’t fail to come. Will explain everything to you then.

William Plover.

Harley looked at this message with satisfaction. "I guess I'm a forger," he mused, "but as the essence of wrong lies in the intention, I'm doing no harm." He stopped at the next station, prepaid the message, and standing by, saw with his own eyes the operator send it. Then he returned to the train and resumed his day's work with great zest.

Harley, at the close of a speech late in the day, sought his new friend Plover. The little man was crushed down in a seat, looking very gloomy. Harley knew that he was thinking of Kalapoosa, the spell of Grayson's eloquence being gone for the moment.

"Tired Mr. Plover?" said Harley, putting a friendly hand on his shoulder.

"A little bit," replied Plover.

"But it's a great day," continued Harley. "I tell you, old man, it's one to be remembered. There never was such a campaign. The story of this ride will be in all the papers of the United States to-

morrow.”

“Ain’t he great! Ain’t he great!” exclaimed Plover, brightening into enthusiasm. “And don’t he hit Wall Street some awful whacks?”

“He certainly is great,” replied Harley. “But you wait until we get to Weeping Water. That’s the last stop, and he’ll just turn himself loose there. You mustn’t miss a word of it.”

“I won’t,” replied Plover. “I’ll have time, because the Denver Express, on which I’m going to Frisco, don’t leave there till 12.40. No, I won’t miss that big speech at Weeping Water.”

They reached Weeping Water at last, although it was full midnight and they were far behind time, and together they walked to the speaker’s stand.

Harley saw Plover in his accustomed place in the front rank, just under the light of the torches where he would meet the speaker’s eye. Then he looked at his watch.

“Twelve fifteen,” he said to himself. “The Denver Express will be here in another fifteen minutes, and Susan will fall on the neck of her

Billy.”

Then he stopped to listen to Grayson. Never had Harley seen him more earnest, more forcible. He knew that Grayson must be sinking with physical weakness—his pale drawn face showed that—but his spirit flamed up for this last speech.

Harley met presently the cousin, Sandidge.

“This is Grayson’s greatest speech of the day,” Harley said, “and how it must please Mr. Plover!”

“That’s so,” replied Sandidge; “but Billy’s all broke up over it.”

“Why, what’s the matter?” asked Harley, in sudden alarm.

“The Denver Express is nearly two hours and a half late—won’t be here until three, and at Denver it’ll miss the Frisco Express; won’t be another for a day. So Billy, who’s in a hurry to get to the coast—the Old Nick’s got into him, I reckon—is goin’ by the express on the B. P.; the train on the branch line that goes out there at 2.10 connects with it, and so does the accommodation freight at 2.40. It’s hard on Billy—he hates to miss any of Jimmy Grayson’s speeches, but he’s

bound to go.”

Harley was touched by real sorrow. He drew his pencil-pad from his pocket, hastily wrote a few lines upon it, pushed his way to the stage, and thrust what he had written into Grayson’s hands. Grayson, stopping to take a drink of water, read this note:

Dear Mr. Grayson:

The Denver Express is two hours and a half late. For God’s sake speak until it comes; you will hear it at three when it pulls into the station. It is a matter of life and death, and while you are speaking don’t take your eye off the little man with the whiskers, who has been with us all day, and who always stands in front and looks up at you. I’ll explain everything later, but please do it. Again I say it’s a matter of life and death.

John Harley.

Grayson looked in surprise at Harley, but he caught the appealing look on the face of the correspondent. He liked Harley, and he knew that he could trust him. He knew, moreover, that what

Harley had written in the note must be true.

Grayson did not hesitate, and nodding slightly to Harley, turned and faced the crowd, like a soldier prepared for his last and desperate charge. His eyes sought those of the little man, his target, looking up at him. Then he fixed Plover with his gaze, and began.

They still tell in the West of Grayson's speech at Weeping Water, as the veterans tell of Pickett's rush in the flame and the smoke up Cemetery Hill. He had gone on the stage a half-dead man. He had already been speaking nineteen hours that day. His eyes were red and swollen with train dust, prairie dust, and lack of sleep. Every bone in him ached. Every word stung his throat as it came, and his tongue was like a hot ember in his mouth. Deep lines ran away from his eyes.

But Jimmy Grayson was inspired that night on the black prairie. The words leaped in livid flame from his lips. Never was his speech more free and bold, and always his burning eyes looked into those of Plover and held him.

Closer and closer pressed the crowd. The

darkness still rolled up, thicker and blacker than ever. Grayson's shoulders sank away, and only his face was visible now. The wind rose again, and whistled around the little town, and shrieked far out on the lonely prairie. But above it rose the voice of Grayson, mellow, inspiring, and flowing full and free.

Harley looked and listened, and his admiration grew and grew. "I don't agree with half he says," he thought, "but, my God! how very well he says it."

Then he cowered in the lee of a little building that he might shelter himself from the bitter wind that was searching him to the marrow.

Time passed. The speaker never faltered. A half-hour, an hour, and his voice was still full and mellow, nor had a soul left the crowd. Grayson himself seemed to feel a new access of strength from some hidden source, and his form expanded as he denounced the Trusts and the Robber Barons and all the other iniquities that he felt it his duty to impale, but he never took his eyes from Plover, to whom he was now talking with a force and directness that he had not equalled

before. Time went on, and as if half remembering some resolution, Plover's hand stole toward the little old silver watch that he carried in the left-hand pocket of his waistcoat. But just at that critical moment Grayson uttered the magical name Wall Street, and Plover's hand fell back to his side with a jerk. Then Grayson rose to his best, and tore Wall Street to tatters.

A whistle sounded, a bell rang, and a train began to rumble, but no one took note of it, save Harley. The 2.10 on the branch line to connect with the Frisco Express on the B. P. was moving out, and he breathed a great sigh of relief. "One gone," he said to himself; "now for the accommodation freight."

The speech continued, but presently Grayson stopped for a hasty drink of water. Harley trembled. He was afraid that Grayson was breaking down, and his fears increased when he saw Plover's eyes leave the speaker's face and wander toward the station. But just at that moment the Candidate caught the little man.

"Listen to me!" thundered Grayson, "and let no true citizen here fail to heed what I am about to



Listen to me!

tell you.”

Plover could not resist the voice and those words of command. His thoughts wandering toward the railroad station were seized and brought back by

the speaker. His eyes were fixed and held by Grayson, and he stood there as if chained to the spot.

Time became strangely slow. That accommodation freight must be more than ten minutes late, Harley thought. He looked at his watch, and found that it was not due to leave for five minutes yet. So he settled himself to patient waiting, and listened to Grayson as he passed from one national topic to another. He saw, too, that the lines in the speaker’s face were growing deeper and deeper, and he knew that he must be

sinking with exhaustion. His soul was stirred with pity. Yet Grayson never faltered.

The whistle blew, the bell rang, and again the train rumbled. The 2.40 accommodation freight on the branch line to connect with the Frisco Express on the B. P. was moving out, and Plover had been held. He could not go now, and once more Harley breathed that deep sigh of relief. Twenty minutes passed, and he heard far off in the east a faint rumble. He knew it was the Denver Express, and in spite of his resolution he began to grow nervous. Suppose the woman should not come?

The rumble grew to a roar, and the train pulled into the station. Grayson was faithful to the last, and still thundered forth the invective that delighted the soul of Plover. The train whistled and moved off again, and Harley waited in breathless anxiety.

A tall form rose out of the darkness, and a woman, middle-aged and honest of face, appeared. The correspondent knew that it must be Susan. It could be nobody else. She was looking around as if she sought someone. Harley's eye

caught Grayson's and it gave the signal.

“And now, gentlemen,” said the Candidate, “I am done. I thank you for your attention, and I hope you will think well of what I have said.”

So saying he left the stage, and the crowd dispersed. But Harley waited, and he saw Plover and his wife meet. He saw, too, the look of surprise and then joy on the man's face, and he saw them throw their arms around each other's neck and kiss in the dark. They were only a poor, prosaic, and middle-aged couple, but he knew they were now happy, and that all was right between them.

When Grayson went to his room he fell from exhaustion in a half-faint across the bed, but when Harley told him the next afternoon the cause of it all, he laughed, and said it was well worth the price.

They obtained about a week later the New York papers containing an account of the record-breaking day. When Harley opened the *Monitor*, Churchill's paper, he read these head-lines:

GRAYSON'S GAB

**HE IS TALKING THE
FARMERS OF THE WEST
TO DEATH**

**TWENTY-FOUR SPEECHES
IN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS**

**HE TALKS FIFTY
THOUSAND WORDS
IN ONE DAY AND
SAYS NOTHING**

But when he looked at the *Gazette*, he saw the following head-lines over his own account:

HIS GREATEST SPEECH

**GRAYSON'S WONDERFUL
EXHIBITION
OF PLUCK
AND ENDURANCE**

**AFTER RIDING FOUR
HUNDRED MILES AND
MAKING TWENTY-THREE
SPEECHES HE HOLDS AN
AUDIENCE SPELLBOUND
FOR THREE HOURS AT
HIS TWENTY-FOURTH**

**SPEAKS FROM MIDNIGHT
UNTIL THREE IN THE
MORNING IN THE OPEN
AIR AND NOT A SOUL**

**LEAVES, THOUGH A
BLIZZARD WAS RAGING**

Harley sighed with satisfaction. “That managing editor of mine knows his business,” he said to himself.



Jimmy Grayson's Spell

The night, after a beautiful, brown October day, came on dark and rainy, with fierce winds off the Rocky Mountains; and Harley, who was in the first carriage, with the Candidate, could barely see the heads of the horses, gently rising and falling, as they splashed through the mud. Behind him he heard faintly the sound of wheels amid the wind and the rain, and he knew that the other correspondents and the politicians, who always hung on the trail of Jimmy Grayson, shifting according to locality, were following their leader in single file.

Although the hood of the carriage was down, and the collar of Harley's heavy coat was turned up to his ears, the cold rain, lashed by the wind, struck him in the face now and then.

"You don't do anything by halves out here on these Western plains," he said.

“No,” replied Jimmy Grayson, “we don’t deal in disguises; when we’re hot we’re hot, and when we’re cold we’re cold. Now, after a perfect day, we’re having the wildest kind of a night. It’s our way.”

It was then ten o’clock, and they had expected to reach Speedwell at midnight, crossing the Platte River on the big wooden bridge; but the rain, the darkness, and the singularly sticky quality of the black Nebraska mud would certainly delay them until one o’clock in the morning, and possibly much later. It was not a cheerful prospect for tired and sleepy men.

“Mr. Grayson,” said Harley, “without seeking to discredit you, I wish I had gone to the Boer war instead of coming out here with you. That would have been less wearing.”

The Candidate laughed.

“But you are seeing the West as few men from New York ever see it,” he said.

The driver turned, and a little stream of water ran off his hat brim into Harley’s face.

“It’s the wind that holds us back, Mr.

Grayson,” he said; “if we leave the road and cut across the prairie on the hard ground it will save at least an hour.”

“By all means, turn out at once,” said the Candidate, “and the others will follow.”

“Wise driver; considerate man!” remarked Harley.

There was marked relief the moment the wheels of the carriage struck the brown grass. They rolled easily once more, and the off horse, lifting up his head, neighed cheerfully.

“It means midnight, and not later, Harley.” said the Candidate, in a reassuring tone.

Harley leaned back in his seat, and trusted all now to the wise and considerate driver who had proposed such a plan. The night was just as black as a hat, and the wind and rain moaned over the bleak and lonesome plains. They were far out in Nebraska, and although they were near the Platte River, it was one of the most thinly inhabited sections in the State. They had not seen a light since leaving the last speaking-place at sundown. Harley wondered at the courage of the pioneers

who crossed the great plains amid such a vast loneliness. He and the Candidate were tired, and soon ceased to talk. The driver confined his attention to his business. Harley fell into a doze, from which he was awakened after a while by the sudden stoppage of the carriage. The Candidate awoke at the same time. The rain had decreased, there was a partial moonlight, and the driver was turning upon them a shamefaced countenance.

“What’s the matter?” asked the Candidate.

“To tell you the truth, Mr. Grayson,” replied the driver, in an apologetic tone, “I’ve gone wrong somehow or other, and I don’t know just where we’re at.”

“Lost!” said Harley.

“If you wish to put it that way, I reckon you’re right,” said the driver, with a touch of offence.

“What has become of the other carriages?” asked Harley, looking back for them.

“I reckon they didn’t see us when we turned out, and they kept on along the road.”

There was no doubt about the plight into which they had got themselves. The plain seemed no

less lonely than it was before the white man came.

“What’s that line of trees across yonder?” asked the Candidate.

“I guess it marks where the Platte runs,” replied the driver.

“Then drive to it; if we follow the trees we must reach the bridge, and then things will be simple.”

The driver became more cheerful, the rain ceased and the moonlight increased; but Harley lacked confidence. He had a deep distrust of the Platte River. It seemed to him the most ridiculous stream in the United States, making a presumptuous claim upon the map, and flowing often in a channel a mile wide with only a foot of water. But he feared the marshes and quicksands that bordered its shallow course.

They reached the line of gaunt trees, dripping with water and whipped by the wind, and Harley’s fears were justified. The river was there, but they could not approach it, lest they be swallowed up in the sand, and they turned back

upon the prairie.

“We must find a house,” said the Candidate; “if it comes to the pinch we can pass the night in the carriage, but I don’t like to sleep sitting.”

They bore away from the river, driving at random, and after an hour saw a faint light under the dusky horizon.

“The lone settler!” exclaimed Harley, who began to cherish fond anticipations of a bed. “Go straight for it, driver!”

The driver was not loath, and even the horses, seeming to have renewed hope, changed their sluggish walk to a trot. They had no hesitation in seeking shelter at that hour, entire strangers though they were, such an act being in perfect accordance with the laws of Western hospitality.

As they approached, a bare wooden house, unprotected by trees, rose out of the plain. A wire fence enclosed a half-acre or so about it, and apparently there had been a few rather futile attempts to make a lawn.

“Looks cheerless,” said Harley.

“But it holds beds,” said the Candidate.

“You save your voice,” said Harley; “I’ll call the farmer, and I hope it will be a man who can speak English, and not some new Russian or Bohemian citizen.”

He sprang out of the carriage, glad to relieve himself from his cramped and stiff position, and walked toward the little gate in the wire fence. There was a sudden rush of light feet, a stream of fierce barks and snarls, and Harley sprang back in alarm as two large bulldogs, red-mouthed, flung themselves against the fence.

“I said you had no cause to regret the Boer war,” called the Candidate from the carriage.

The wires were strong, and they held the dogs; but the animals hung to the fence, as fierce as wolves; and Harley, lifting up his voice, added to the chorus with a “Hi! Hi! Mr. Farmer! Strangers want to stop with you!”

The din was tremendous, and presently a window in the second story was shoved up, and a man, fully dressed, carrying a long-barrelled rifle in his hands, appeared at it. He called to the dogs, which ceased at once their barking and snarling,



Mr. Farmer with a gun

and then he gazed down at the intruders in no friendly manner.

Harley saw him clearly, a tall, gaunt old man, white-haired but muscular and strong. He held the rifle as if he were ready to use it—a most unusual thing in this part of the country, where householders seldom kept firearms.

“What do you want?” he called, in a sharp, high voice.

“Beds,” cried Harley. “We are lost, and if you don’t take us in we’ll have to sleep on the prairie, which is a trifle damp.”

“Wa’al I ’low it hez rained a right smart,” said the old man, grimly.

Harley noticed at once the man’s use of “right smart,” an expression with which he had been familiar in another part of the country, and it encouraged him. He was sure now of hospitality.

“Who are you?” the old man called.

“Mr. Grayson, the Democratic nominee for President of the United States, is in the carriage, and I am his friend, one of the newspaper correspondents travelling with him.”

“Wait a minute!”

The window was closed, and in a few moments the old man came out at the front door. He carried the rifle on his shoulder, but Harley attributed the fact to his haste at the mention of Jimmy Grayson’s name.

“My name is Simpson—Daniel Simpson,” he said, hospitably. “Tell the driver to put the horses in the barn.”

He waved his hand toward a low building in the rear of his residence, and then he invited the Candidate and the correspondent to enter. He looked curiously, but with reverence, at the Candidate.

“You are really Jimmy Grayson,” he said. “I’d know you offhand by your picture, which I guess hez been printed in ev’ry newspaper in the United States. I ’low it’s a powerful honor to me to hev

you here.”

“And it’s a tremendous accommodation to us for you to take us,” said Jimmy Grayson, with his usual easy grace.

But Harley was looking at Simpson with a gaze no less intent than the old man had bent upon Grayson. The accent and inflection of their host were of a region far distant from Nebraska, but Harley, who was born near that wild country, knew the long, lean, narrow type of face, with the high cheek bones and the watchful black eyes. Moreover, there was something directly and personally familiar in the figure before him.

Under any circumstances, the manner of the old man would have drawn the attention of Harley, whose naturally keen observation had been sharpened by the training of his profession. The old man seemed abstracted. His fingers moved absently on the stock of his rifle, and Harley inferred at once that he had something of unusual weight on his mind.

“Me an’ the ol’ woman hev been settin’ late,” said Simpson. “When you git ol’ you don’t sleep

much. But it'll be a long time, Mr. Grayson, before that fits you."

He led the way into a room, better furnished than Harley had expected to see. A coal fire smouldered on the hearth, and the arrangement of the room showed some evidences of lightness and taste. An old woman was bent over the fire, But she rose when the men entered, and turned upon them a face which Harley knew at once to be that of one who had been frightened by something. Her eyes were red, as if she had been weeping. Harley looked from host to hostess with curious glance, but he was still silent.

"This is Marthy, my wife, gen'lemen," said Simpson. "Marthy, this is Mr. Grayson, the greatest man in this here United States, and the other is one of the newspaper fellers that travels with him."

Jimmy Grayson bowed with great courtesy, and apologized so gracefully for the intrusion that an ordinary person would have been glad to be intruded upon in such a manner. The woman said nothing, but stared vacantly at her guests. The old man came to her relief.

“Marthy ain’t used to visitors, least of all a man like you, Mr. Grayson, and it kind o’ upsets her,” he said. “You see, Marthy an’ me lives here all by ourselves.”

The woman started and looked at him.

“All by ourselves,” repeated the man, firmly: “but we’ll do the best we kin.”

“Daniel,” suddenly exclaimed the old woman in high, shrill tones, “why don’t you put down your gun? Mr. Grayson ’ll think you’re a-goin’ to shoot him!”

The old man laughed, but the ever-watchful Harley saw that the laugh was not spontaneous.

“I ’clar’ to gracious!” he said; “I clean forgot I had old Deadeye. You see, Mr. Grayson, when I heerd the dogs barkin’, sez I to myself ‘it’s robbers, shore’; and before I h’ists the window upstairs, I reaches old Deadeye off the hooks, and then if it had a-been robbers, it wouldn’t a-been healthy for ’em!”

“I’m sure of that, Mr. Simpson,” said Jimmy Grayson; “you don’t look like a man who would allow himself to be run over.”

“An’ I wouldn’t!” said the old man, with sudden, fierce emphasis. But he put the rifle on the hooks over the fireplace. Such hooks as these were not usual in Nebraska; but Jimmy Grayson was too polite to say anything, and Harley was still watching every movement of the old man. The driver returned at this moment from the stable, and, reporting that he had fed the horses, took his place with the others at the fire.

“I ’low you-uns would like to eat a little,” said the old man, laughing in the same unnatural way. “Marthy, tote in suthin’ from the kitchen as quick as you kin.”

The old woman raised her startled, frightened eyes, and for a moment her glance met Harley’s; it seemed to him to be full of entreaty; the whole atmosphere of the place was to him tense, strained, and tragic; why, he did not know, but he shook himself and decided that it was only the result of weariness, the long ride, and the night in the storm. Nevertheless, the feeling did not depart because he willed that it should go.

“No, we thank you.” Jimmy Grayson was saying; “we are not hungry; but we should like

very much to go to bed.”

“It’s jest with you,” said Simpson. “Marthy, I’ll show the gen’lemen to their room, and you kin stay here till I come back.”

The old woman did not speak, but stood in a crouched attitude looking at Grayson and then at Harley and then at the driver; it seemed to the correspondent that she did not dare trust her voice, and he saw fear still lurking in her eyes.

“Come along, gen’lemen,” said Simpson, taking from the table a small lamp, that had been lighted at their entrance, and leading the way.

Harley looked back once at the door, and the woman’s eyes met his in a look that was like one last despairing appeal. But there was nothing tangible, nothing that he could not say was the result of an overwrought fancy.

It was a small and bare room, with only a single bed, to which the old man took them. “It’s the best I’ve got,” he said, apologetically. “Mr. Grayson, you an’ the newspaper man kin sleep in the bed, an’ tother feller, I reckon, kin curl up on the floor.”

“It is good enough for anybody,” said Jimmy Grayson, gallantly. As a matter of fact, both he and Harley had known what it was to fare worse.

“Good night,” the man said, and left them rather hastily, Harley thought; but the others took no notice, and were soon in sound slumber, the Candidate, because he had the rare power of going to sleep whenever there was a chance, and the driver, because he was indifferent and tired.

But Harley lay awake. An hour ago his dream of heaven was a bed, and now, the bed attained, sleep would not come near. Out of the stillness, after a while, he heard the gentle moving of feet below, and he sat up on the bed, all his suspicions confirmed. Something unusual was going on in this lone house! And it had been going on even before he and the Candidate came!

He listened to the moving feet for a few moments. Then the noise ceased, but Harley knew that there was no further chance of sleep for him, with his nerves on edge, and likely to remain there. He lay back on the edge of the bed, trying to accustom his eyes to the darkness, and presently he heard a sound, the most chilling that

a man can hear. It was the sound of a woman, alone and in the dark, between midnight and morning, crying gently, but crying deeply, uncontrollably, and from her chest.

Harley's resolve was taken at once. He slipped on his clothes and went to the door. His eyes were used now to the dark, and there was a window that shed a half-light.

He stopped with his hand on the bolt, because he heard the low, wailing note more plainly, and he was sure that it came from another room across the narrow hall. He turned the bolt, but the door refused to open. There was no key on the inside! They had been locked in, and for a purpose!

Harley was fully aroused—on edge with excitement, but able to restrain it, and to think clearly. There was an old grate in the room, apparently used but seldom, and leaning against the wall beside it an iron poker. Tiptoeing, he obtained the poker, and returned to the door. The lock was a flimsy affair, and, inserting the point of the poker under the catch, he easily pried it off, and put it gently on the floor.

Then he stepped out into the dusky hall and listened. The woman was yet crying, monotonously, but with such a note of woe that Harley was shaken. He had thought in his own room that it was the old woman who wept thus; but now in the hall he knew it to be a younger and fresher voice.

He saw farther down another door, and he knew that it led to the room from which came the sounds of grief. He approached it cautiously, still holding the poker in his hands, and noticed that there was no key in the lock. The woman, whoever she might be, was locked in, as he and his comrades had been; but the empty keyhole gave him an idea. He blew through it, making a sort of whistling sound with his puckered lips. The crying ceased, all save an occasional low, half-smothered sob, as if the woman were making a supreme effort to control her feelings.

Then Harley put his lips to the keyhole again, and whispered: "What is the matter? It is a friend who asks." There was no reply, only a tense silence, even the occasional sobs ceasing. Then, after a few moments of waiting, Harley

whispered, “Don’t be alarmed: I am about to force the door.”

The door was of flimsy pine, and it gave quickly to the poker’s leverage. Then, this useful weapon still in hand, Harley stepped into the room, where he heard a deep-drawn sigh that expressed mingled emotions.

There was a window at the end of the room, and the moonlight shone clearly through, clothing with its full radiance a tall slim girl, who had risen from a chair, and who stood trembling before Harley, fully dressed, although her long hair hung down her back and her eyes were red with weeping.

She was handsome, but not with the broad face of the West. Hers was another type, a type that Harley knew well. The cheek bones were a little high, the features delicate, the figure slender, and there was on her cheeks a rosy bloom that never grew under the cutting winds of the Great Plains.

Harley knew at once that she was the daughter of the old couple below stairs.

“Do not be afraid of me,” he said, gently. “I

know that you are in great trouble, but I will help you. I, too, am from Kentucky. I was born there, and I used to live there, though not in the mountains, as you did.”

The appeal and terror in her eyes changed to momentary surprise. “What do you know of me?” she exclaimed.

“Very little of you, but more of your father. Years ago I was at his house in the Kentucky Mountains. He was the leader in the Simpson-Eversley feud. I knew him to-night, but I have said nothing. Now, tell me, what is the matter?”

His voice was soothing—that of a strong man who would protect, and the girl yielded to its influence. Brokenly she told the story. Many men had been killed in the feud, and the few Eversleys who were left had been scattered far in the mountains. Then old Daniel Simpson said that he would come out on the Great Plains, more than a thousand miles, and they had come.

“There was one of the Eversleys—Henry Eversley—he was young and handsome. People said he was not bad. He, too, came to Nebraska.

He found out where we lived; he—has been here.”

“Ah!” said Harley. He felt that they were coming to the gist of the matter.

The girl, with a sudden passionate cry, threw herself upon her knees. “He is here now! He is here now!” she cried. “He is in the cellar, bound and gagged, and my father is going to kill him! But I love him! He came here to-night, and my father caught us together, and struck him down. But we meant nothing wrong. I declare before God that we did not! We were getting ready to run away together and to be married at Speedwell!”

Harley shuddered. The impending tragedy was more terrible than he had feared.

“You can do nothing!” exclaimed the girl. “My father is armed. He will have no interference! He cares nothing for what may come after! He thinks —”

She could not say it all: but Harley knew well that what she would say was, “He thinks that he has been robbed of his honor by a mortal enemy.”

“Can you stay quietly in this room until morning?” he asked. “I know it is hard to wait under such circumstances, but you must do it for the sake of Henry Eversley.”

“And will you save him?”

“He shall be saved.”

“I will wait,” she said.

Harley slipped noiselessly out, and, closing the door behind him, went to his room, where he at once awakened the Candidate.

Jimmy Grayson listened with intense attention to Harley’s story. When the tale was over, he and Harley whispered together long and earnestly, and Jimmy Grayson frequently nodded his head in assent. Then they awoke the driver, a heavy man, but with a keen Western mind that at once became alert at the news of danger.

“Yes, I got my bearings now,” he said in reply to a question of Harley’s. “I asked the old fellow about it when I came up from the stable, and Speedwell is straight north from here. I can take one of the horses and hit the town before daylight. I know everybody there.”

“But how about the dogs?” asked Jimmy Grayson. “Can you get past them?”

“No trouble there at all. After we came, the old fellow locked ’em up in a stall in the stable and left ’em there. I guess he didn’t want to look to us as if he was too suspicious.”

“Then go, and God go with you!” said Jimmy Grayson, with deep feeling.

“He will do his part,” he said; “now for ours.”

He did not seek sleep again, and Harley could not think of it. The flush of dawn appeared in the East at last, and then they heard a faint step in the hall outside, and the gentle turning of a key in a lock. A half hour later there, was a loud knock on their door, and old Daniel Simpson bade them rise, and get ready for breakfast.

“It is chiefly in your hands now,” said Harley, in a low tone to Jimmy Grayson.

They entered the dining-room where the breakfast smoked on the table, and Simpson and his wife were waiting.

“Whar’s your driver?” asked Simpson.

“He has gone down to the stable to feed and care for his horses,” replied the Candidate, easily.

“Then be seated,” said the old man, hospitably. “We’ve got corn-bread and ham and eggs and coffee, an’ I guess you kin make out.”

The
three sat
at the
table,
while
Mrs.
Simpson
served
them.



Jimmy

Breakfast

Grayson did most of the talking, and it was addressed in a very confidential manner to old Daniel Simpson. He fairly radiated with the quality called personal magnetism, and soon the old man ate mechanically, while his attention was riveted on Jimmy Grayson.

The old man sank into his chair, but his look wandered to the door. It seemed to Harley that light sounds came from the other part of the

house, and the old man, too, appeared for a moment to be listening; but Jimmy Grayson at once began a story, and Simpson's attention came back.

"This is a story of the mountains of eastern Kentucky," began the Candidate, "and it is a love story, a very pretty one, I think."

Simpson moved in his chair, and a sudden wondering look appeared in his eyes at the words "eastern Kentucky." But Jimmy Grayson took no notice, and continued:

"This," he said, "is the love story of two people who were young then, but who are old now. The youth and the girl belonged to families that were at war with each other, and a marriage between them would have been considered by all their relations a mortal sin. They were compelled to meet in secret, but the girl was frightened for him, because she loved him. She told him that he must go away—that if her father and brothers heard of their meetings they would kill him. He listened to her gently and tenderly. He would not go away; he was not afraid."

“No, I was not afraid,” breathed the old man, softly. The old woman straightened herself up, until she stood erect. There was a delicate flush on her face, and her eyes were luminous.

“The youth did what I would have done, and what you would have done. Mr. Simpson,” continued Jimmy Grayson. “He overbore all resistance on the part of the girl, who in her heart was willing to be overborne. One dark night he stole her from her father’s house and carried her away on his horse.”

“How well I remember it!” exclaimed the old man, with eyes a-gleam. “I had Marthy on the horse behind me, and my rifle on the pommel of the saddle before me.”

“Before morning they were married,” continued Jimmy Grayson. “Then he took her to a house of his own that he had built, and he sent word that if any man came to do them harm he would meet a rifle-bullet. And that youth and that girl are still living, though both are old now; but neither has ever, for a moment, regretted that night.”

“You speak the truth!” exclaimed the old man, striking his fist upon the table, while his eyes flashed with exultant fire. “We’ve never been sorry for a moment for what we did, hev we, Marthy?”

Harley had risen to his feet, and a signal look passed between him and the Candidate.

“And then,” said Jimmy Grayson, “why do you deny to Henry Eversley the right to do what you did, and what you still glory in after all these years? Mr. Simpson, shake hands with your new son-in-law. He and his bride are waiting in the doorway.”

The old man sprang up. His daughter and a youth, a handsome couple, stood at the entrance. Behind them were three or four men, one the driver, and another in clerical garb, evidently a minister.

“They were married in your front parlor, while we sat at breakfast,” said Jimmy Grayson. “Mr. Simpson, your son-in-law is still offering you his hand.”

The bewildered look left the old man’s eyes,

and he took the outstretched hand in a hearty grasp.

“Henry,” he said, “you’ve won.”



A Dawn in the Desert

The candidate, in his great swing through the West, made a loop far down into the country which is called semi-arid by its inhabitants and by boomers, but which seems to anybody else only a sea of hot sand under a hotter sky. At least Harley of the New York Gazette could find in it neither beauty nor use, as he stared through the car window at the low, rolling expanse of brown, dotted here and there with clumps of the thorny cactus. It was monotonous, ugly, and, above all, awful in its loneliness.

In the car the heat quivered like a mist, and the passengers drew deep panting breaths. They could not open the windows, because the moment they lifted the glass, even for an inch, the burning sand, borne on the breath of the desert wind, drove in like hail, powdering the face, filling the eyes, creeping under the collar, and harrying like one of the seven plagues of Egypt. So they abode

in the still, thick heat, lying limply against the backs of the seats, and enduring as best they could.

“My God! what a country!” said Harley to himself as he stared at the sandy ocean, rippling away in its ugly brown billows.

Three or four of the correspondents, worn out by the great campaign of the Candidate—incessant work night and day—had taken an earlier train for Deepdeane, in order that they might get a little rest, leaving the others to handle the news for them in their absence from Jimmy Grayson’s side; by and by they would return the favor, and the understanding was complete, good faith being a matter of course.

In three more hours they would be in Deepdeane, and Harley repeated the name to himself more than once. There was a sort of grim satisfaction in rolling it under the tongue; its smooth poetic sound and its significance were in such striking contrast with the country in which it lay; he had noticed before this frequent peculiarity of the desert people, their fondness for names redolent of green grass, clear running

water, and trees in bloom. He would not be surprised to pass, one after the other, such stations as Lovers' Lane, Silver Water, Green Grove, and Meadow Grass, all in the brown desert.

“You can talk of the glories of freedom and unlimited space,” said his friend Barton, “but there isn't money enough to hire me to live here. Better a year of a Harlem flat and an ‘L’ strap than fifty years of this.”

Harley did not reply, and Barton, exhausted by this small display of energy, was silent until they reached Deepdeane, a few hours later.

Deepdeane was all that Harley had expected, merely a dozen houses, the majority of corrugated tin or adobe on the bare plain, but sheltered somewhat from the sandstorms by a curving brown ridge to the south and to the west. It was all bleak and desolate, without a drop of water anywhere save that which was brought in tanks by the railroad. Hundreds of empty tin cans, many of them battered into curious shapes, glittered in the sun. Of all the raw crude towns that Harley had seen in the desert, this was the

rawest, the crudest, and the ugliest. “Barton was right,” he murmured.

The correspondents, valises in hand, stepped from the train, faces, clothing, and grips alike powdered a whity-brown by the alkali dust.

The train whistled, started with a rumble, and quickly disappeared in a brown cloud of dust under the southwestern horizon.

“My God! we are marooned! left alone on a desert island!” exclaimed the volatile Barton, looking at the fleeting brown cloud as the abandoned looks after the departing ship.

Harley felt the force of his words. Although three of his comrades were with him, he had never before known such a sense of desolation and desertion. All of civilization seemed to be hanging on to the rear platform of the ugly ordinary day train which had just disappeared in the brown cloud. “I’d go crazy if I had to live here,” was his thought.

“I wonder if the place is alive.” said Barton. “It may be an abandoned town. The fact that Jimmy Grayson is to speak here is no proof that it isn’t,

because when he speaks all the cowboys in a ring of a hundred miles come to hear him, and one spot is as good as another.”

As he spoke, a cowboy, in sombrero, hickory shirt, and leggings came out of a low adobe hut, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand.

“It is inhabited!” exclaimed Barton, triumphantly, “and that hut, as I infer from the suggestive action of our friend the cowboy, is the saloon. At least we shall not perish in the desert of thirst.”

The cowboy went behind the adobe hut, and when he reappeared he was mounted upon a pony.

“I am willing to wager that our unknown friend is about to desert this God-forsaken place and leave it to us alone!” exclaimed Barton.

He was right; the cowboy rode into the desert, and he, too, disappeared in a brown cloud. Barton uttered woful lamentations. “We’ll never see him,” he said with pathos.

But when they went further into the village he became more cheerful, even joyous.

“Behold!” he exclaimed, pointing a long forefinger. “See the splendor! and the reminder of home, too!”

They came to a two-story wooden building, from which all the paint had been blown long since by the desert winds, but over the low veranda was written in glaring letters, “New York Hotel.”

Harley shared Barton’s joy. The question of food and lodging in the desert, even where the railroad ran, was not always easy to solve, and this building, despite its wind-blown air of neglect, gave promise.

They entered the house, and the landlord, a bedraggled man in carpet slippers, shuffled forward to meet them.

“When the sun’s so ’tarnal hot as this,” he said, “I don’t go out to meet the train; I reckon if anybody stops they kin find the hotel theirselves, an’ they won’t find any but mine, ’cause there ain’t any other.”

“The grasping hand of monopoly is felt even here,” whispered Barton.

Yes, he had rooms, plenty of them, and he could give them something to eat, canned goods from Chicago and beef. If the gents would be seated, Bill would take the valises up to their rooms, and he'd have dinner ready in half an hour.

They gladly resigned their valises to "Bill," a large, stoop-shouldered, sun-browned man even more ragged and unkempt than his employer, and then, after washing their faces with imported water in a little lean-to behind the house, felt much refreshed.



Bill

"It isn't what you have, but what you haven't

had, that makes a thing good,” said Barton, with a contented sigh. “After that hot train this old ramshackle is a regular Waldorf-Astoria in the desert to me.”

“All the same, it’s the jumping-off place,” said Harley, looking out at the dusty plain.

The landlord, who was making some effort at a hospitable welcome, joined them, and said that dinner would be ready in a few minutes.

“I reckon you gents belong to Jimmy Grayson’s outfit that’s due here to-morrow,” he said, tentatively. “I reckon there ain’t anythin’ else that would bring so many stiff collars to Deepdeane.”

“You are right,” replied Harley; “we are newspaper correspondents travelling with Mr. Grayson, but in order to enjoy your town part of us have come on ahead, as you see.”

“That’s right,” replied he of the hotel, affably. “Deepdeane ain’t much on looks, I’m willin’ to allow, but if a fellow knows how to go about it he kin have a right good time here. Now, you gents are hungry, and you kin go right in. Bill’s ready

with the dinner.”

All sat at one table covered with a cloth not too clean, but long fasting made the beef and the canned goods sweet to their taste, and they ate with sharpened appetites. The big man, Bill, waited on them in silence, but once when Harley asked him if he could not get him a glass of water he replied, “Yes, sir; it will take only a moment,” in a voice low, but so well modulated, so mellow, and so perfect in accent that Harley looked up in surprise. He saw only a face covered with unkempt brown beard, and the waiter suddenly turned his eyes away when they met Harley’s. None of the others had noticed the quality of the waiter’s voice, and Harley said nothing, but he watched Bill as he moved about the room serving the dinner.

There was nothing attractive in the waiter’s appearance; his clothing was without a touch of neatness; his hair had not been combed for a week, but noticeable above all was his manner, which inspired mingled repulsion and pity; it was impossible for him to stand the gaze of any one; if anybody’s look by chance met his, his eyes

dropped at once. The whole effect that he created was spiritless and abject. It seemed to Harley that if Deepdeane was the jumping-off place here was the fit inhabitant of it.

Barton was talking as only he could talk—that is, all the time, and his flow of spirits occupied all except Harley, who, out of the corner of his eye, was watching the dejected waiter. At last he said to the man,

“How far is it ahead to the next town?”

“Sixty miles, sir,” replied Bill, using only three words, but they were liquid, flowing, and musical.

Harley started; some old memory in him stirred, but when he sought to trace it and make some connection it was gone in a moment like a breath. He spoke again, and more than once to the waiter before the dinner was over, but Bill no longer replied in words, merely with a nod or a shake of the head, and the correspondent turned his attention back to his comrades.

The landlord, John Keyes he gave his name, was pleased with his guests; in some dim, remote

day, when he was a farm lad in Indiana, he had gone with a car-load of cattle to New York, and he felt that the fact established a strong connection with the correspondents, all of whom were from the metropolis. When Barton gave him a chance he talked glowingly about the country and its prospects.

“Great for cattle,” he said. “an’ the ground’s full of gold an’ silver. We don’t need nothin’ but capital from the East, an’ we’ll have that as soon as Jimmy Grayson is runnin’ the gov’ment to suit us.”

They were sitting in the veranda now, and with the approach of evening the air was growing cooler and much more pleasant. Harley was in a tilted chair near the door, where he could command a view of the dining-room. Bill was still shuffling about the tables, and it seemed that other guests were expected. In fact, the town disclosed more signs of life, as the sun began to set, and people appeared from mysterious regions. Two or three men went into the dining-room, and Bill served them with the same cringing, abject manner. The last of these was a

Mexican, a vicious, yellow little man who first found fault with the food, and then did a thing that no one but Harley saw.

The Mexican suddenly raised his open palm and struck the big waiter in the face. Bill murmured some apologetic words and went on with his work. Harley was so astonished that he could not speak; he had expected to see the waiter, abject and cringing though he was, fell the Mexican to the floor. Then his blood boiled up in furious wrath. That an American should take such a blow from a miserable yellow half-breed was past belief. Yet he had seen it with his own eyes. He brought his teeth together with such a sharp click that it drew the attention of Barton.

“Why, Harley, old man,” he exclaimed, “what on earth are you looking so savage about?”

“I’ve just seen something that I do not like,” replied Harley.

He was staring out over the vast, ugly sweep of the brown plain.

“Oh, the desert,” said Barton. “But there’s nothing new in that. You’ve been seeing it all

day. Besides, why glower about it? We're in Deepdeane now, and there's a bed and twelve hours of sleep just ahead. It's to be glad, not mad."

Harley maintained a discreet silence, and Barton's attention soon wandered back to the talkative group, of which he and the landlord of the New York Hotel were the centre. But Harley, while seeming to listen, kept an eye on the dining-room, where the big, bearded waiter shuffled listlessly among the tables. Once the man saw Harley looking; but his eyes fell instantly before the correspondent's glance, and he hurried into a corner of the room where the troubling gaze could not follow him; but before he disappeared Harley saw his whole figure shivering as in nervous alarm.

The sun was sinking in the desert. Brilliant terraces of purple and red and gold, heaped on the horizon, heralded its going. Then it suddenly shot through them and was lost like a stone in water. Darkness, borne on the edge of a chill wind, swept over the plain, and the desert night had come. The men shivered and went inside.

“What a curious contrast the night is to the day here?” said Harley.

“Yes,” said the phlegmatic Keyes, “you can cool off now.”

All the correspondents except Harley drifted off to their rooms. He said that he did not care for bed just yet, claiming to have slept in the train. He put on a light overcoat, and announced a desire to wander about the town and see the sights.

“Don’t you go far,” said Keyes; “if you were to git a half-mile out in the desert you might never find the town again, and that ’ud be the last of you.”

Harley promised, and went out into the so-called street, merely a strip of the broad desert, between the squalid houses, and stood there for a few moments. If the place was desolate in the day, it was awful in its loneliness at night, because then it had a peculiar weird and chilling quality. Out on the desert the wind was moaning like a lost soul, and Harley could readily imagine that he was the only human being with in a sweep



Scraps and bones

of five hundred miles, with nothing around him but sand and cactus. Indeed, it was more like fact than fancy.

But it was no part of Harley's intention to explore the desert. He had noticed the waiter throwing the debris from the tables

on a heap behind the house, and he walked silently to the rear of the New York Hotel. Presently he saw the man coming; he knew the figure by the size, and the stoop, like a cringe. Bill carried a bucket half filled with scraps and bones, and throwing them upon the heap turned to go back to the house. In the darkness he did not notice the correspondent standing at his elbow. Harley touched him on the arm.

"Harry," he said, in a voice low but insistent, "what does this mean?"

Bill stood as if paralyzed. The bucket slid from

his hand, and fell with a slight clang to the ground. But Harley's grasp was on his arm. Bill looked up, and Harley, faint though the moonlight was, could see that his eyes were full of terror.

"Harry," repeated Harley, his voice growing more insistent, "tell me, what do you mean by this?"

Suddenly the waiter, a man six feet high and with a head like Michael Angelo, began to cry. Harley had seen men cry but a few times in his life, and the sound of a man's sobs drawn deep from his chest unnerved him.

"Harry," he exclaimed, "stop! For God's sake, stop!"

The man made no effort to restrain himself, and Harley saw his great shoulders quivering. By and by both were silent again, but out on the desert the wind was yet moaning like a lost soul.

Harley spoke a third time, still calling the man "Harry"; nor was there contempt in his voice, only pity. "Harry," he said, "whatever you may tell to me is sacred. You know me well enough to

know that it will never go further if you wish.”

The big man suddenly fell forward, not on his knees, but in a limp heap, and grovelled against the earth.

“Charlie,” he exclaimed, “you have found me, and how have you found me! I never thought that it would come, and even if it should come, I never thought that it would come this way. I thought that I was hidden forever! Why should any one whom I ever knew want to come to such a spot as this in such a desert—this devil’s hole! Deepdeane, they call it! You don’t know what a mockery that name is!”

“I can guess,” said Harley, gently.

“Yes, you can guess: anybody can. An hour of it is enough. But I belong here. I’m like it. I’m as God-forsaken as it is. You saw that yellow half-breed Mexican strike me in the face, and I didn’t have the courage to strike back. And it isn’t the first time I’ve been struck, either. But you never knew me. I’m not the man. I’m just Bill, the waiter. kicked about because I deserve to be.”

He put his face in his hands and groaned.

Harley walked up and down, taking short steps. He did not know what to do or to say. The wind still moaned across the desert. Behind them only two or three lights glimmered in the little town. They were alone with the universe.

“Harry,” he asked at last, “what on earth made you come here?”

“To be away from everybody. And it’s the best place for that. You know what I was once, and you know, too, what I am now: but you remember, too, what I’ve been through. There’s some excuse. Oh, I’m low, and, what’s worse, I know it. You might hunt all this Southwest, and you would find nobody else who is kicked and trod upon as I am and who doesn’t resent it; but, Charlie, I’m crushed! I tell you, I’m crushed!”

He repeated mechanically the word “crushed! crushed!” and though the night was now cold, Harley took off his hat and drew his hand across his brow. When he took it away it was wet.

“I tell you I’m crushed, all smashed up!” the man went on, monotonously, but in his singular liquid voice like the dropping of melted gold,

“and it all dates from that awful night. You were there. You remember it; but as for me, it is like yesterday. I know I had been drinking, drinking for days, and doing other things as bad or worse; but, my God! Charlie, you know what an excuse I had! There had been talk about me—talk in the city, lots of it. and the crowd was one of the biggest that I ever faced—curiosity brought ’em; and then when I got up to speak I could utter nothing but a miserable little squeak. Think how supremely ridiculous, how idiotic it was! I could have stood everything if I had kept my voice, the one thing that made me famous; but it’s gone, and gone forever.”

Harley stopped in his short walk up and down, and looked curiously at the man whose voice in his agony expressed every range of human passion and woe.

“Harry,” he said, “you’ve heard that Jimmy Grayson is to speak here to-morrow night.”

“What’s that to me?”

“Listen to what I say. Jimmy Grayson is a great orator. God gave him the gift of tongues. We call

him the Golden-Mouthed.”

“Yes,” said the correspondent as if talking to himself. “I knew but one man who was his equal, but he isn’t before the public now. Perhaps he was Jimmy Grayson’s superior, but, for all his wonderful powers, for all this great gift that God had sent him he was a fool, the biggest fool that I have ever known.”

“Oh, don’t, Charlie!” groaned the man.

“I speak what I think,” said Harley, in firm, accusing tones.

“I don’t defend myself; you can call me anything you please: no name will be too hard for me, but think of all that I’ve gone through, what came before that night, and all that has happened since—since I came to this hole. You don’t suppose I’ve forgotten, do you, those old days when I was happy and famous? You remember that first great speech of mine, the one that set everybody to talking! You reported it yourself, Charlie—that was when I first met you—and they gave it four full columns on the front page of the Gazette, and even the staid old Milestone,

which was never known to approve wholly of anybody, said that I was not without promise; don't you remember it. Charlie?"

"I remember it very well," said Harley, glancing out at the dark desert, and shuddering at the loneliness and desolation around him.

The man, who had risen with the old memories, threw himself upon the sand again.

"Oh. God, Charlie!" he cried. "I can't stand it! I was called the pick of them all. There was none who could speak as I, there was none who could sway the crowd as I could! Charlie, I always felt the power in me; I could think best when I got on my feet, and then I had the voice. I don't take any credit for that; it was a gift which might as well have gone to some one else."

Harley had been thinking intently. "Harry," he said, "I want you to hear Jimmy Grayson tomorrow night, if for nothing else, to hear yourself as you used to be. I want you to shave off that hideous beard, put on good clothes, hold your head up, and sit near Jimmy Grayson with me. where you can hear every word that he says."

The waiter shook in sudden terror.

“I can’t do it! I can’t do it!” he cried. “There’s Blaisdell coming, and if I fix up he’ll know me, and there may be more. I can take a blow now, but I can’t take that.”

“They need not know you, though it would be all right if they should. Jimmy Grayson. I suppose, will speak on the little square platform that I saw just beyond the hotel, and all except where he stands will be in the dark. You shall be there with me.”

“Charlie, I don’t dare! I don’t dare,” said the waiter.

“You shall be there with me.” said Harley, decisively. “I’ll attend to everything. You see. Harry, you can’t escape me. This spot in the desert isn’t more than three hundred yards across, and I’ve got you cornered. Good night.”

He held out his hand and the waiter looked wonderingly at it.

“Nobody has shaken hands with me in years.” he said.

“Harry, are you going to refuse my hand? Do

you wish to insult me?"

The waiter seized the outstretched hand, shook it convulsively two or three times, and then, without a word, ran into the house.

Harley remained there a long time, gazing into the illimitable desert, which seemed to him so truly a grave. At last he went in, but as he passed through the lower hall of the hotel he heard the strident voice of the landlord rebuking Bill, the waiter, for laziness and neglect.

"Half them dishes ain't washed up yet," he said.

Bill made no reply, but Harley saw him bent over a pile of dirty dishes. The correspondent sighed and went up to his room. When he awoke the next day the sun was high in the sky, hanging like a ball of copper over the burning desert. After breakfast he sought the landlord.

"Mr. Keyes," he said, "I want to hire your man, Bill, for this afternoon and evening. He's taken a foolish notion that he'd like to fix up like a gentleman and hear Jimmy Grayson, and I've taken an equally foolish notion that I'd like to

have him do it.”

Keyes stared at the correspondent.

“Wa’al, you Eastern people are pow’ful cur’us,” he said. “You kain’t fix up Bill like a gentleman; you might put gentlemen’s clothes on him, but he’d be the same dirty, cringin’ fellow without the sperrit of a coyote in him.”

“It’s my notion.” said Harley, briefly, “and I’m willing to pay for it.”

“A man kin be a crank any time he pleases if he’s got the price to pay for it.”

Harley named a sum for a half day of Bill’s services that Keyes promptly accepted, and the bargain was closed.

“There’s a Mexican feller aroun’ here that I kin ring in in Bill’s place,” he said.

Barton came to Harley an hour later, when he was sitting comfortably on the veranda, his eyes shaded from the sun, and plumped himself down in the next chair.

“See here, Harley!” he exclaimed, “what is this I hear about you? and you of all fellows, the one

whom I never knew to do a cranky thing before? They tell me you are going to dress that slouching dirty waiter, Bill, in good clothes, and take him up on the platform to-night with Jimmy Grayson.”

“They tell you the exact truth,” said Harley, his eye on a bare red hill in the desert.

“Why?”

“Just a freak idea of mine: I wish to break the monotony.”

Barton snapped his fingers incredulously.

“Do you see any hayseed about me?’ he asked. ”I know you don’t do things that way. There’s something queer in this—yes, queer.”

Harley did not take his eyes off the distant red hill, but he replied, gravely:

“Yes, there is something queer, one of the queerest things I ever met in my life. How long have you been working on the New York papers?”

“Eight years.”

“Then you remember the Great Davenport

Mystery?”

“Of course; that was too big a sensation to forget, even in this day of sensations—the brilliant fellow who went all to pieces and then dropped off the face of the earth, so to speak. Wasn’t there a nasty scandal, beforehand?”

“Yes, his wife, you know—another man—Davenport got a divorce, of course, but that couldn’t cure the wound. Began to drink, to drink at a terrible rate—the same imaginative quality that made him a great orator, pushed him to the very depths of dissipation. I suppose.”

“I remember.” exclaimed Barton, with increasing interest. “Then he was to speak in the Madison Square Garden—enormous crowd there, all his political enemies, too, looking for at least a part of what came—I was present at the reporter’s table—what a scene! He broke down, not an idea, and what was worst of all, his voice, that wonderful voice, was gone: he just squeaked. How his enemies howled! I was present at the reporter’s table, and I can’t forget that look on Davenport’s face: it was like a man struck by lightning—and he so young, too—he couldn’t

have been much more than thirty.”

“It was all just as you say,” said Harley.

“But, what has all this to do with this fool thing you are planning?”

“A lot.”

Barton wheeled in his chair and stared at Harley. But Harley was still looking at the bare red hill out in the desert, and his hat brim was low down over his eyes.

“You don’t mean—”

“Yes, I do mean. Now, Barton, old man, don’t say a word, but just do as I tell you, and make the other fellows do the same. You promise?”

“Yes, I promise,” replied Barton, and said no more, but he was the victim of a devouring curiosity.

After the twilight Harley took the waiter up to his room, the man weakly protesting, but obeying the stronger will of the correspondent as a dog obeys his master. Harley forced him to shave off the hideous beard, and when it was gone he was surprised to observe how little the features had

changed, how the old, bold classic outlines reappeared. Then he produced from his valise what he called his "Sunday suit." long black frock-coat, vest, and light trousers that he wore sometimes when he came to the larger towns in the West.

"Harry," he said, "I'm a big man, too, and this will fit you well enough for to-night. Not a word now! Throw off those old things of yours and get into this suit at once."

The man glanced timidly at Harley, but he seemed afraid to speak, and after a moment's hesitation put on the clothes. Apparently the good garments, of a cut that belonged to the present, exercised an effect upon him as he straightened up and looked at himself in the dusty glass on the wall. A faint gleam as of a spirit long gone appeared in his eyes, and he threw back his shoulders. Harley, looking at him, was surprised. The man, now that he did not stoop, stood more than six feet high. His smoothly shaven face was broad and open, and the hair beginning to thin at the temples, retreated slightly from the brow. Harley was more than surprised, he was startled.

“Strange that two men with the same gift should look so much alike,” he murmured.

The waiter did not notice him, but was still staring at himself in the glass, as if all the old memories were busy. Harley looked again at the man, the tall, erect figure, the smooth, massive features, the hair rather long, slightly tinged with gray and brushed back from the forehead, the black string tie and the long black coat, buttoned tightly about the broad chest.

“How like!” he murmured.

The waiter turned away and glanced at the window.

“Come, Harry,” said Harley, briskly, “the crowd has gathered, and it’s time to go. Don’t you be nervous; it’s pitch-dark everywhere except at the very edge of the speaker’s platform, and nobody will see you.”

He put his hand firmly upon the man’s arm, and together the two went out of the house and toward the improvised stage in the open from which Jimmy Grayson was to speak.

Black night enfolded the desert, as the moon

was not yet risen. The crowd had gathered already, although the candidate's train was not due until 8.30, and that was fifteen minutes away. It was a typical Southwestern crowd, drawn from a circle of a hundred miles—prosperous cattlemen, cowboys, mining prospectors and wanderers, all quiet, orderly and waiting, ready to applaud every sentence that their hero, Jimmy Grayson, might utter. Closely packed, they formed a wide black ring around the speaker's stand.

Harley, with his hand still on the waiter's arm, pushed his way through the crowd toward the platform, which was almost wholly in the dark, except at the table beside which Jimmy Grayson would stand, where two lanterns flickered. He and the waiter climbed upon the platform where Barton and his comrades were already seated at the table placed for the correspondents.

“Pretty dusky for writing, eh Barton?” said Harley.

“Oh. it's all right.” replied Barton, easily. “Long practice is a good thing, and there isn't a fellow here who couldn't write in the dark.”

He looked up and by the flickering light he caught a glimpse of the waiter. He started and was about to utter an exclamation, but he remembered his promise and was silent.

“Sit here. Harry, and you can hear well.” whispered Harley, placing a chair in the farthest and darkest corner of the stage. The big man sat down obediently and Harley sat near him.

Time passed and the crowd standing there in the darkness thrilled with expectation. In a few minutes Jimmy Grayson, their idol, would be there, and they would hear the golden notes of his voice.

The multitude now began to give forth all the familiar sounds of a great political gathering. There was the noise of moving feet, of long breaths, of men making comparisons and recalling other speeches. In the distance horses stamped and rattled their bits.

Harley, despite the dark, was watching Bill, the waiter, and he was so close that he could see. When the multitude first began to talk and show expectation the man suddenly raised his head,

and a fire that had long seemed dead began to kindle in his eyes. Harley, watching him, said nothing, but despite his habitual calm a strange excitement rose in his breast at what he saw.

The old familiar sights and sounds, this block of life projected from the past, went on, and the soul of Bill, the waiter, continued to expand. The fire in his eyes grew brighter, his figure expanded, and he raised his head higher and higher. Harley had seen wild animals in their cages suddenly lift their heads and sniff the air as if forgotten whispers of the wild, free jungle, had suddenly come back to them. He thought again of this, as he looked now at Bill, the waiter.

The expectation of the crowd mounted higher, and the shuffling noises, the hum, and the occasional cheers increased.

“Now is the favorable moment; he ought to appear.” murmured Bill, the waiter.

Harley heard him, but said nothing.

A whistle came from the desert, then a roar, and the train pulled into the station. Harley heard the noise of men leaving it, and then dark figures

for which the crowd made way climbed upon the stage beside him. One that stumbled over him was Blaisdell of the *Eagle*.

“Where’s Mr. Grayson?” asked Harley.

“Why. there’s the deuce to pay!” exclaimed Blaisdell. “Mr. Grayson was beguiled out on the branch line for a little speech; he thought he’d make the connection all right and get back in time, but he didn’t. Two of the fellows are with him, and the rest of us are here. Where’s the chairman of this meeting? I’ve got a telegram for him, explaining and apologizing, but Mr. Grayson, I’m sure, is all broken up over it. You know how honest he is in these matters. He knows that lots of these men have come a hundred miles to hear him.”

Harley snatched the telegram out of the astonished man’s hand.

“I’m the chairman.” he cried. “or at least I’m going to be. Listen how the people are yelling and cheering and calling for Grayson! They think he’s here on the stage with us, and he isn’t! Yes, he is! I swear he is! Jimmy Grayson himself or

his double! Just you wait half a minute and you'll hear him at his best. Now, Billy, do exactly what I say and don't ask a word; you don't know how much depends on it. Get right in the crowd this instant and raise that famous old battle-cry, the war-whoop the boys used to raise when Harry Davenport was up to speak! Yes, Harry Davenport. 'Harry Davenport.' the greatest, the only heaven-born orator New York ever knew."

He pushed Blaisdell directly off the platform into the crowd, but he saw his friend rise and disappear among the figures. The next instant the people were startled by a long-drawn, high-pitched cry that rose in wave on wave and burst in a final explosion like fireworks. It caught the crowd in an instant, and the facile Westerners imitated it. Led by Blaisdell the tremendous battle-cry poured now from hundreds of throats, rose and swelled in volume again and again until it echoed far out on the desert.

But Harley scarcely heard it. At the first note of the old familiar cheer he turned his eyes upon Bill, the waiter. The man had been sitting in a sort of daze, but the correspondent saw him leap to

his feet at the sound, his eyes flashing and his chest heaving. He ran to him and seized him by both shoulders.

“Come!” he cried, in compelling tones. “It’s you they want! they’ve found you out at last! They know that you are Harry Davenport, the great orator! Don’t you hear the old cry never raised for anybody but you?”

“I believe you’re right,” the man said under his breath, but not so low that Harley did not hear.

In a moment the strong arms of Harley pushed him down to the edge of the stage, and then the applause doubled. Harley raised his hand, and instantly there was silence.

“Gentlemen.” cried Harley. at the top of his voice, “I desire to introduce to you the speaker of the evening!”

And then he added under his breath, but sharply:

“Now give it to ’em, Harry! You know how to do it! You’ve lived here and you know how they feel. You feel the same way yourself! Pitch into the corporations and the trusts and the

monopolies, and you can sprinkle free silver about, too! I'm against it, but it doesn't matter!"

Again the cheers swelled, roared, and then died, to be followed by the strange breathless silence that only a crowd can create.

The tall figure, standing there in the more than twilight dusk, wavered for a few moments, but Harley had no doubts. He knew that the hour had come at last. He saw Davenport's figure straighten and stiffen, and his broad chest heave again. Then the man began to speak in liquid golden notes, in a voice that penetrated, persuaded, and compelled.

The people had never seen Jimmy Grayson. They had worshipped him from afar, and, in their minds, had built for him lofty ideals, but now he fulfilled and excelled their highest hopes. No one could resist the beauty of his voice or the strength of his logic. Metaphors, tropes, similes, allegories, flowed from his tongue. He used phrases and illustrations familiar in their daily life, drawn from their own desert, from their own mighty Southwest. He seemed to have upon him the stamp of their vast, free plains; he was one of



A speech in the desert

themselves. They wondered at the way in which he shared their hopes, fears and joys, and they admired. They yielded themselves, too, to his spell, they cheered when he seemed to will it, and they were silent when he wished silence.

Now and then a man would whisper to another: "I knew that Jimmy Grayson was great, but I did not know that he was so great as this," and then he would look up again in more than admiration

at the tall figure in the long black coat, standing there in the dusk at the edge of the stage, and swaying the people as he would.

Harley, sitting scarcely a yard away, watching every movement of Davenport, and every fleeting phase of his face, understood all. He saw the red tide of manhood flowing back in a full stream, he saw the dead and crushed soul springing into new life all the fresher and stronger because of its long rest, at the touch of the old life, at the sound of the old familiar noises, the inspiration and stimulus of a great political gathering that looked up to him for strength and leading. Harry Davenport's new dawn had come in the desert after a long sleep that he had taken for death, the golden voice that had failed him once was there again, stronger and deeper than ever, returning in a rushing flood. As he sat on the stage he had been in a sort of daze—he was yet in some respects—he thought that all these people had called for him and not for Jimmy Grayson, and the old battle-cry that roused him from the dead ashes was still ringing in his head. He expanded, body and mind alike with the sense of power and

triumph. He was Harry Davenport, Harry Davenport, the great orator, who, at thirty, was without an equal, who could hold ten thousand in his spell, as the hypnotist holds his subject.

Harley, watching intently, saw every vestige, the last semblance of Bill, the waiter, slip from the man. Bill, the waiter, merely formed the ashes from which, phoenix-like, came the triumphant resurrection of Harry Davenport. Never again would that tall figure be bowed, and no more would Harry Davenport cringe before any one. If a man struck him he would do it at the risk of his own life.

The wind still moaned on the desert, and the night air grew chill, but no one noticed. There was but a single mind in all that vast assemblage of hard-riding, unfeeling men, the mind of Harry Davenport, and he moulded the others into the image of his. He made them see what he saw, and he made them follow where he led. Hour after hour he spoke; all the silent thoughts of years came pouring forth, clothed in beautiful language, adorned with familiar and striking images, and spoken in tones like the swell of

organ music. Now and then, when he paused for a moment, the volume of cheers would rise, and always Blaisdell led with the old thrilling battle-cry.

It was past midnight when Harry Davenport turned with the final words, "that is all I have to say, gentlemen," and sank exhausted in his chair. Then the cheering broke forth in a volume greater than ever, and above it rose the voices of men shouting: "Hurrah! Hurrah! for Jimmy Grayson!" Davenport heard it and turned a startled look on Harley.

"Oh, Charlie!" he exclaimed in an agonized voice, "what have I done?"

"Nothing except the work for which you were born. Come, Harry, your long purgatory is over; you go with us tomorrow."

The next day the Eastern train on the main line picked up Jimmy Grayson at the junction, and went on. But in the same coach with The Candidate sat a man wonderfully like him, pale and smoothly shaven, who was dressed in a suit of clothes not his own. And always this man's

mind, like his face, was turned toward the Northeast, and in his ears was the distant roar of the world's greatest city.



The Third Degree

The Candidate and his company were due that night at Grayville, a brisk Colorado town, dwelling snugly in the shadow of high mountains, and hopeful of a great future, based upon the mines within its limits, and the great pastoral country beyond, as any of its inhabitants, asked or unasked, would readily have told you. Hence there was joy in the train, from Jimmy Grayson down, because the next day was to be Sunday, a period of rest, no speeches to be made, nothing to write, but just rest, sleeping, eating, idling, bathing, talking—whatever one chose to do. Only those who have been on arduous campaigns can appreciate the luxury of such a day now and then, cutting like a sweep of green grass, across the long and dusty road.

“They tell me that Grayville has one of the best hotels in the mountains,” said Barton to Harley, his brother correspondent. “That you can get a

dinner in a dozen courses, if you want it, and every course good; that it has real porcelain-lined bathtubs, and beds sure to cure the worst case of insomnia on earth. Do you think this improbable, this extravagant, but most fascinating tale can be true, Harley?"

"I live in hope," replied Harley.

"Jimmy Grayson has been here before," interrupted Hobart, of the New York *Leader*, "and he says it's true, every word of it; if Jimmy Grayson vouches for a thing, that settles it; and here is a copy of the Grayville *Argus*; it has to be a pretty good town that can publish as smart a daily as this."

He handed a neat sheet to Barton, who laughed.

"There speaks the great detective," he said. "You know, Harley, how Hobart is always arguing from the effect back to the cause."

Hobart, in fact, was not a political writer, but a "murder mystery" man, and the best of his kind in New York, but the regular staff correspondent of his paper, the *Leader*, being ill, he had been

sent in his place. Hobart was a Harvard graduate and a gentleman, with a taste for poetry, but he had a peculiar mind, upon which a murder mystery acted as an irritant—he could not rest until he had solved it—and his paper always put him on the great cases, such as those in which a vast metropolis like New York abounds. Now, he was restless and discontented; the tour seemed to him the mere reporting of speeches and obvious incidents that everybody saw; there was nothing to unravel, nothing that called for the keen edge of a fine intellect.

“Grayville, with all its advantages as a place of rest, is sure to be like the other mountain towns,” he said, somewhat sourly, “the same houses, the same streets, the same people. I might almost say, the same mountains. There will be nothing unusual, nothing out of the way.”

Harley had taken the paper from Barton’s hands and was reading it.

“At any rate, if Grayville is not unusual, it is to have an unusual time,” he interrupted.

“How so?”

“It is to hear Jimmy Grayson speak Monday, and it is going to hang a man Tuesday. See, the two events get equal advance space, two columns each, on the front page.”

He handed the paper to Hobart, who looked at it a little while, and then

dropped it with an air of increasing discontent.

“That may mean something to the natives,” he said; “it may be an indication to them that their place is becoming important—a metropolis in which things happen—but it is nothing to me. This hanging case is stale and commonplace; it is perfectly clear; a young fellow named Boyd is to be hanged for killing his partner, another miner; no doubt about his guilt, plenty of witnesses against him, his own denial weak and halting—in



The gallows

fact, half a confession; jury out only five minutes; whole thing as bald and flat as this plain through which we are running.”

He tapped with his finger on the dusty car-window, and his whole expression was so gloomy that the others could not restrain a laugh.

“Cheer up, old man,” said Barton. “Four more hours and we are in Grayville; just think of that wonderful hotel, with its more wonderful beds and its yet more wonderful kitchen.”

The hotel was all that they either expected or hoped, and the dawn brought a beautiful Sunday, disclosing a pretty little frontier city with its green, irrigated valley on one side and the brown mountains, like a protecting wall, on the other. Harley slept late, and after breakfast came out upon the veranda to enjoy the luxury of a rocking-chair, with the soft October air around him, and the majesty of the mountains before him. But there was a persistent inquiring spirit abroad which would not let him rest, and this spirit belonged to Hobart, the “mystery” man.

Harley had not been enjoying the swinging

ease of the rocking-chair five minutes before Hobart, the light of interest in his eyes, pounced upon him.

“Harley, old man,” he exclaimed, “this is the first place we’ve struck in which Jimmy Grayson is not the overwhelming attraction.”

“The hanging. I suppose!” said Harley, carelessly.

“Of course. What else could there be? It occurred to me last night, when I was reading the paper, that I might scare up a feature or two in the case, and I was out of my bed early this morning to try. It was a forlorn hope, I’ll admit, but anything was better than nothing, and I’ve had my reward. I’ve had my reward, old man!”

He chuckled outright in his glee. Harley smiled. Hobart always interested and amused him. The instinctive way in which he unfailingly rose to a “case” showed his natural genius for that sort of thing.

“I haven’t seen Boyd yet,” continued Hobart, excitedly, “but I’ve found out this much already: There are people in Grayville who believe Boyd

innocent. It is true that he and Wofford—the murdered man—had been quarrelling in Grayville, and Boyd was taken at the shanty with the blood-stained knife in his hand, but that doesn't settle it."

Harley could not restrain an incredulous laugh. "It seems to me those two circumstances, without the other proof, are pretty convincing," he said.

Hobart flushed. "You just wait until I finish," he said, somewhat defiantly. "Now Boyd, as I have learned, was a good-hearted, generous young fellow. The quarrel amounted to very little, and probably had been patched up before they reached their shack."

"That is a view which the jury evidently could not take."

"Juries are often wooden-headed."

"Of course; in the eyes of superior people."

"Now don't you try to be satirical—it's not your specialty. I mean to finish the tale. If you read the paper, you will recall that the shanty, where the murder occurred, was only a short distance from the mountain road, and there were



The shanty on the
mountain road

three witnesses, Bill Metzger, a dissolute cowboy who was passing, and who, attracted by Wofford's death-cry, ran to the cabin and found Boyd, blood-stained knife in hand, bending over the murdered

man; Ed Thorpe, a tramp miner, who heard the same cry and who came up two or three minutes later, and finally Tim Williams, a town idler, who was on the mountain-side, hunting. The other two heard him fire his gun a few hundred yards away, and called to him. When he arrived, Boyd was still dazed and muttering to himself, as if overpowered by the horror of his crime."

"If that isn't conclusive then nothing is," said Harley, decisively.

"It is not conclusive; there was no real motive for Boyd to do such a thing."

"To whom did the knife belong?"

“It was a long bread-knife that the two used at the cabin.”

“There you are! Proof on proof!”

“Now, you keep silent. Harley, and come with me, like a good fellow, and see Boyd in the jail. If you don’t, I swear I’ll pester the life out of you for a week.”

Harley rose reluctantly, as he knew that Hobart would keep his word. He believed it the idlest of errands, but the jail was only a short distance away, and the business would not take long. On the way Hobart talked to him about the three witnesses. Metzger, the cowboy, on the day of the murder, had been riding in from a ranch further down the valley; the other two had been about the town until a short time before the departure of Boyd and Wofford for their cabin.

They reached the jail, a conspicuous stone building in the centre of the town, and were shown into the condemned man’s cell. The jailer announced them with the statement:

“Tim, here’s two newspaper fellers from the East wants to see you.”

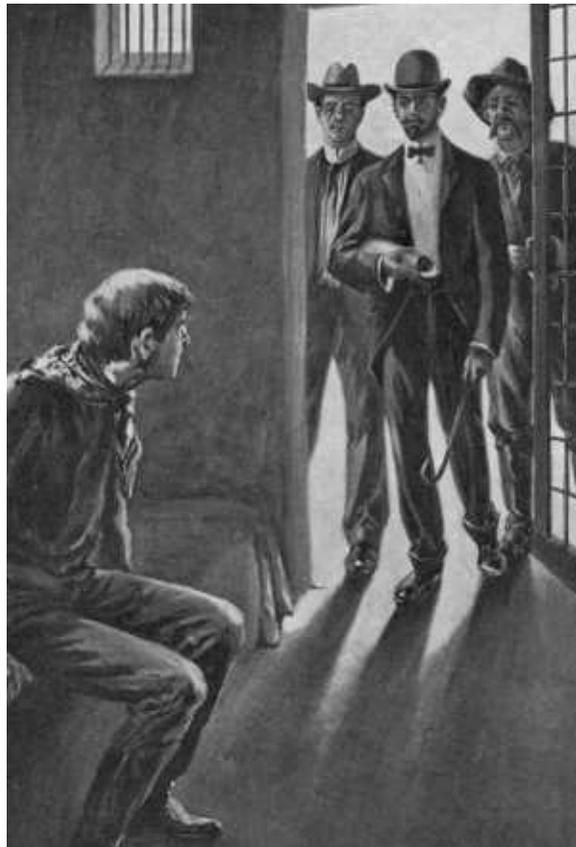
The prisoner was lying on a pallet in the corner of his cell, and he raised himself on his elbow when Harley and Hobart entered.

“You are writers for the papers?” he said.

“Yes, clean from New York; they are with Jimmy Grayson,” the jailer answered for them.

“I don’t know as I’ve got anythin’ to say to you,” continued the prisoner.

“I ain’t got no picture to give you, an’ if I had one I wouldn’t



The jail cell

give it. I don’t want my hangin’ to be all wrote up

in the papers, with pictures an' things too, jest to please the people in the East. If I've got to die, I'd rather do it quiet and peaceful, among the boys I know. I ain't no free circus."

"We did not come to write you up; it was for another purpose," Harley hastened to say.

He was surprised at the youth of the prisoner, who obviously was not over twenty-one, a mere boy, with good features, and a look half defiant, half appealing.

"Well, what did you come for, then?" asked the boy.

Harley was unable to answer this question, and he looked at Hobart as if to indicate the one who would reply. The "mystery" man did not seek to evade his responsibility in the least, and promptly said:

"Mr. Boyd, I think you will acquit us of any intention to intrude upon you. It was the best of motives that brought us to you. I have always had an interest in cases of this sort, and when I heard of yours in the train, coming here, I received an impression then which has been strengthened on

my arrival in Grayville. I believe you are innocent.”

The boy looked up. A sudden flash of gratitude, almost of hope, appeared in his eyes.

“I am!” he cried. “God knows I didn’t kill Bill Wofford. He wuz my partner and we wuz like brothers. We did quarrel that mornin’—I don’t deny it—and we both had been liquorin’; but I’d never hev struck him a blow of any kind, least of all a foul one.”

“Was it not true that you were found with the bloody knife in your hand, standing over his yet warm body?” asked Hobart.

“It’s so, but it was somebody else that used the knife. Bill went on ahead, and when I come into place I saw him on the floor an’ the knife in ’im. I was struck all a-heap, but I did what anybody else would a-done—I pulled the knife out. And then the fellers come in on me. I was rushed into a trial right away. Of course I couldn’t tell a straight tale; the horror of it was still in my brain, and the effect o’ the liquor too. I got all mixed up—but before God, gen’lemen, I didn’t do it.”

His tone was strong with sincerity, and his expression was rather that of grief than remorse. Harley, who had had a long experience with all kinds of men in all kinds of situations, did not believe that he was either bad or guilty. Hobart spoke his thoughts aloud.

“I don’t think you are guilty,” he said.

“Everybody believes I am,” said Boyd, with pathetic resignation, “and I am to be hanged for it. So what does it matter now.”

“I am going to look for the guilty man,” said Hobart, decidedly.

Boyd shook his head and lay back on his pallet. The others, with a few words of hope, withdrew, and when they were outside Harley said:

“Hobart, were you not wrong to sow the seed of hope in that man’s mind when there is no hope?”

“There is hope,” replied Hobart; “I have a plan. Don’t ask me anything about it—it’s vague yet—but I may work it.”

Harley glanced at him, and, seeing that he was

intense and eager, with his mind concentrated upon this single problem, resolved to leave him to his own course; so he spent most of the day, a wonderful October Sunday, in luxurious idleness, in a rocking-chair on the piazza of the hotel, but Grayville being a small place, he knew everything that was going on within it, by means of a sort of mental telepathy that the born correspondent acquires. He knew, for instance, that Hobart was all the time with one or the other of the three witnesses. Metzger, Thorpe and Williams, for the moment the most important persons in Grayville by reason of their conspicuous connection with the great case.

When Hobart returned, the edge of the sun was behind the highest mountains, but he took no notice of Harley, walking past him without a word, and burying himself somewhere in the interior of the hotel. Harley learned subsequently that he went directly to Jimmy Grayson's room, and remained there at least half an hour, in close conference with the Candidate himself.

The next day was a break in the great campaign. Owing to train connections, which are

not trifles in the Far West, it was necessary, in order to complete the schedule, to spend an idle day at some place, and Grayville had been selected as the most comfortable and therefore the most suitable. And so the luxurious rest of the group was continued for twenty-four hours for all—save Hobart.

Harley had never before seen the “mystery” man so eager and so full of suppressed excitement. He frequently passed his comrades, but he rarely spoke to them, or even noticed them; his mind was concentrated now upon a great affair in which they would be of no avail. Harley learned, however, that he was still much in the company of the three witnesses, although he asked him no questions. Late in the afternoon he saw him alone and walking rapidly towards the hotel. It seemed to Harley that Hobart’s head was borne somewhat high and in a manner exultantly, as if he were overcoming obstacles, and he was about to ask him again in regard to his progress, but Hobart once more sped by without a word and went into the hotel. Harley learned later that he held a second secret

conference with Jimmy Grayson.

In the evening everybody went to the Opera-House to hear the Candidate, but on the way Hobart said casually to Harley:

“Old man, I don’t think I’ll sit in front tonight. I wish you would let me have your notes afterwards.”

“Of course,” replied Harley, as he passed down the aisle and found his chair at the correspondents’ table on the stage.

There Harley watched the fine Western audience come into the theatre and find seats, with some noise, but no disorder, a noise merely of men calling each other by name, and commenting in advance on what Jimmy Grayson would say. The other correspondents entered one by one—all except Hobart, and took their seats on the stage. Harley looked for Hobart, and two or three times he saw him near the main entrance of the building. Once he was talking with a brown and longish-haired youth, and Harley, by casual inquiry, learned that it was Metzger the cowboy. A man not greatly different in

appearance, to whom Hobart spoke occasionally, was Thorpe, the tramp miner, and yet another, a tall fellow with a bulging underlip, Harley learned, was Williams, the third witness.

Evidently the three witnesses would attend Jimmy Grayson's meeting, which was natural, however, as everybody in Grayville was sure to come, and Harley also surmised that Hobart had taken upon himself the task of instructing them as to the methods, the manner, and the greatness of the Candidate. He had done such a thing himself, upon occasion, the Western interest in Jimmy Grayson being so great that often appeals were made to the correspondents for information about him more detailed than the newspapers gave.

Harley studied the faces of the three witnesses as attentively as the distance and the light would admit, but they remained near the door, evidently intending to stand there, back to the wall, a plan sometimes adopted by those who may wish to slip out quietly before a speech is finished. Harley, the trained observer, saw that Hobart, without their knowledge, was shepherding them as the shepherd gently makes his sheep converge

upon a common spot.

The correspondent could draw no inference from the faces of the three men, which were all of usual Western types, without anything special to distinguish them, and his attention turned to the audience. He had received an intimation that Jimmy Grayon would deliver that evening a speech of unusual edge and weight. He would indict the other party in the most direct and forcible manner, pointing out that its sins were moral as well as political, but that a day of reckoning would come, when those who profited by such evil courses must pay the forfeit; it was a part of the law of nature which was also the law of retribution.

The Candidate was a little late, and the Opera-House was filled to the last seat, with many people standing in the aisles and about the doors. Harley, glancing again at the rows and rows of faces, saw the three witnesses almost together, and just to the right of the main entrance, where they leaned against the wall facing the stage. Hobart fluttered about them, holding them in occasional talk, and Harley was just about to look

again, and with increasing attention, but at that instant the great audience, with a common impulse and a kind of rushing sound like the slide of an avalanche, rose to its feet. The Candidate, coming from the wings, had just appeared upon the stage, and the welcome was spontaneous and overwhelming. Jimmy Grayson was always a serious man, but Harley noticed that evening, when he first appeared before the footlights, that his face looked tense and eager, as if he felt that a great task which he must assume lay just before him.

He wasted no time, but went at once to the heart of his subject, the crime of a great party, the wicked ways by which it had attained its wicked ends, and from the opening sentence he had his great audience with him, heart and soul.

The indictment was terrible; in a masterly way he summed up the charges and the proof, as a general marshals his forces for battle, and the audience, so clear were his words and so strong his statements, could see them all marching in unison like the battalions and brigades, toward the common point, the exposed centre of the

enemy.

Again and again, at the pauses between sentences, the cheers of the audience rose and echoed, and then Harley would glance once more toward the door; there, always, he saw Hobart with the three witnesses, gathered under his wing, as it were, all looking raptly and intently at Jimmy Grayson.

The Candidate by and by seemed to concentrate his attention upon the four men at the door, and spoke directly to them. Harley saw one of the group move as if about to leave, but the hand of Hobart fell upon his arm and he stayed. Harley, too, was conscious presently of an unusual effect having the quality of weirdness. The lights seemed to go down in the whole Opera-House, except near the door. Jimmy Grayson and the correspondents were in a semidarkness; but Hobart and his three new friends beside the door stood in a light that was almost dazzling through contrast. The three witnesses now seemed to be fixed in that spot, and their eyes never wandered from Jimmy Grayson's face.

Familiar as he was with the Candidate's oratorical powers Harley was surprised at his strength of invective that evening. He had proved the guilt, the overwhelming guilt of the opposition party, and he was describing the punishment, a punishment sure to come, although many might deem it impossible.

But there would be a day of judgment; justice might sleep for a while, but she must awake at last, and the longer vengeance was delayed, the more terrible it became. Then woe to the guilty.

The audience was deeply impressed by the eloquence of Jimmy Grayson, coinciding so well with their own views. Harley saw a look of awe appear upon the faces of many, and the house, save for the voice of Jimmy Grayson, was as still as death. Harley felt the effect himself, and the weird, unreal quality that he observed before increased. Once when he went over to make some notes he noticed that the words written a half hour before were scarcely visible, but when he glanced at the opposite end of the theatre there stood Hobart and the three witnesses, gathered about him in the very heart of a dazzling light

that showed every changing look on the faces of the four. Harley's gaze lingered upon them, and again he tried to find something peculiar, something distinctive in at least one of the three witnesses, but as before he failed; they were to him just ordinary Westerners following with rapt attention every word and gesture of Jimmy Grayson.

The Candidate went on with his story of the consequences; the crime had been committed; the profits had been reaped and enjoyed, but slumbering justice, awake at last, was at hand; it was time for the wicked to tremble, the price must be repaid, doubly, trebly, fivefold. Now he personified the guilty party, the opposition, which he treated as an individual; he compared it to a man who had committed a deed of horror, but who long had hidden his crime from the world; others might be suspected of it, others might be punished for it, but he could never forget that he himself was guilty; though he walked before the world innocent, the sense of it would always be there, it would not leave him night or day; every moment even before the full exposure it would be

inflicting its punishment upon him; it would be useless to seek escape or to think of it, because the longer the guilty victim struggled the more crushing his punishment would be. The correspondents forgot to write, and, like the audience, hung upon every word and gesture of Jimmy Grayson, as he made his great denunciatory speech; they felt that he was stirred by something unusual, that some great and extraordinary motive was impelling him, and they followed eagerly where he led them.

Harley saw the look of awe on the faces of the audience grow and deepen. With their overwhelming admiration of Jimmy Grayson they seemed to have conceived too a sudden fear of him. His long, accusing finger was shaken in their faces, he was not alone denouncing a guilty man, but he was seeking out their own hidden sins, and presently he would point at them his revealing finger.

Hobart stood with the three witnesses beside the door, still in the dazzling light. Harley was sure that not one of the four had moved in the last half hour, and Jimmy Grayson still held them all

with his gaze. Harley suddenly saw something like a flash of light, a signal glance, as it were, pass between him and Hobart, and the next instant the voice of the Candidate swelled into greater and more accusing volume.

“Now you behold the guilty man,” said Jimmy Grayson. “I have shown him to you. He seems to the world full of pride and power, but he knows that justice is pursuing him, and that it will overtake him; he trembles, he cowers, he flees, but the avenging footsteps are behind him, and the sound of them rings in his frightened ears like a death-knell to his soul. A wall rises across his way. He can flee no farther, he turns, back to the wall, raises his terror-stricken eyes, and there before him the hand of fate is raised; its finger points at him, and a terrible voice proclaims, ‘thou art the guilty man!’”

The form of Jimmy Grayson swelled and towered, his hand was raised, the long forefinger pointed directly at the four who stood in the dazzling light, and the hall resounded with the tremendous echoes of his cry:

“Thou art the guilty man!”

As if lifted by a common impulse, the great audience rose with an indescribable sound, and faced about, following Jimmy Grayson's long, accusing finger.

The man Williams threw his arm before his face, as if to protect himself, and, with a terrible cry, "Yes, I did it!" fell in a faint on the floor.

They were all on a train in Wyoming, four days later, and Harley was reading from a copy of the *Grayville Argus* an account of Boyd's release and the ovation that the people had given him.

"How did you trace the crime to Williams, Hobart?" asked Harley.

"I didn't trace it; it was Jimmy Grayson who brought it out by giving him 'the third degree,'" replied Hobart, though there was a quiet tone of satisfied pride in his voice. "You know that in New York when they expose a man at Police Headquarters to some such supreme test they call it giving him 'the third degree,' and that's what we did here. It seems that Williams was in the saloon when Boyd and his partner quarrelled, and he knew they had a lot of gold from the claim in

their cabin. His object was robbery. When he saw Wofford go on ahead he followed him quickly to the cabin, and killed him with the knife which lay on a table. He expected to have time to get the gold before Boyd came, but Boyd arrived so soon that he was barely able to slip out. Then Williams, cunning and bold enough, came back as if he were a chance passer-by and had been called by Metzger and Thorpe. The other two were as innocent as you or I.

“I could not make up my mind which of the three was guilty, and I induced Jimmy Grayson to help me. It was right in line with his speech—no harm done even if the test had failed—and then the man who managed the lights at the Opera-House, a friend of Boyd’s, helped me with the stage effects. Jimmy Grayson, of course, knew nothing about that. I borrowed the idea. I have read somewhere that Aaron Burr by just such a device once convicted a guilty man who was present in court as a witness when another was being tried for the crime.”

“Well, you have saved his life to an innocent man,” said Harley.

“And I have cost a guilty one his.” And then, after a moment’s pause, Hobart added, with a little shiver:

“But I wouldn’t go through such an ordeal again at any price. When Jimmy Grayson thundered out. ‘Thou art the guilty man’ it was all I could do to keep from crying, ‘Yes, I am, I am!’”



A Dead City



Red Leary's gang

When the special train was at Blue Earth, in Montana, among the high mountains, there came to Jimmy Grayson an appeal, compounded of pathos and

despair, that he could not resist. It was from the citizens of Crow's Wing, forty miles deeper into the yet higher and steeper mountains, and they recounted, in mournful words, how no candidate ever came to see them; all passed them by as

either too few or too difficult, and they had never yet listened to the spell of oratory; of course they did not expect the nominee of a great party for the Presidency of the United States to make the hard trip and speak to them, when even the little fellows ignored them; nevertheless, they wished to inform him in writing that they were alive, and on the map at least they made as big a dot as either Helena or Butte.

The Candidate smiled when he read the letter. The tone of it moved him. Moreover, he was not deficient in policy—no man who rises is—and while Crow’s Wing had but few votes, Montana was close, and a single State might decide the Union.

“These people at Crow’s Wing do not expect me, but I shall go to them,” he said to his train.

“Why, it’s a full day’s journey and more, over the roughest and rockiest road in America,” said Mr. Curtis, the State Senator from Wyoming, who was still with them.

“I shall go,” said Jimmy Grayson, decisively. “There is a break here in our schedule, and this

trip will fit in very nicely.”

The others were against it, but they said nothing more in opposition, knowing that it would be of no avail. Obliging, generous, and soft-hearted, the Candidate nevertheless had a temper of steel, when his mind was made up, and the others had learned not to oppose it. But all shunned the journey with him to Crow’s Wing except Harley and Mr. Herbert Heathcote, a National Committeeman from an Eastern State.

The going of Harley with the Candidate was taken as a matter of course by everybody. Silent, tactful, and strong he had grown almost imperceptibly into a confidential relationship with the nominee, and Jimmy Grayson himself did not realize how much he relied upon the quiet man who could not make a speech, but who knew the American people so well and who was so ready of resource. As for Mr. Heathcote, being an Eastern man, he wished to see the West in all its aspects.

They started at daybreak, guided by a taciturn mountain man, Jim Jones, called simply Jim for the sake of brevity, and, the hour being so early,

but few were present to see them ride up the hanging slope and into the mighty wilderness.

But it was a glorious dawn. The young sun was gilding the sea of crags and crests with burnished gold, and the air had the sparkle of youth. Mr. Heathcote threw back his slightly narrow chest, and drawing three deep breaths of just the same length, he said, "I would not miss this trip for, a thousand dollars!"

Harley said nothing, but he too looked out upon the morning world with a kindling eye. Far below them was a narrow valley, a faint green line down the centre showing where the little river ran, with the irrigated farms on either side, like beads on a string. Above them towered the peaks, white with everlasting snow.

"A fine day for our ride." said the Candidate to Jim.

"Looks like it now, though I never gamble on mountain weather," replied the taciturn man.

But the promise held good for a long time, the sun still shining, and the winds coming fresh and brisk along the crests and ridges. The trail wound

about the slopes and steadily ascended. Vegetation ceased and before them stretched the bare rocks. Harley knew very well now that only the sunshine saved them from grimness and desolation. The loneliness became oppressive. It was the wilderness in reality as well as seeming; nowhere did they see a miner's hut or a hunter's cabin; only nature in her most savage form.

The little group of horsemen were silent. The Candidate's head was bowed and his brow bent. Clearly he was immersed in thought. Mr. Heathcote, unused to such arduous journeys, leaned forward in his saddle in a state of semiexhaustion. Harley said at last to the guide, "A wild country, one of the wildest, I think, that I ever saw."

"Yes, a wild country and a bad 'un too," responded Jim. "See off there to the left,"

He pointed to a maze of bare and rocky ridges, and when he saw that Harley's gaze was following his long forefinger he continued:

"I say it's a bad 'un because over there Red Perkins and his gang of horse thieves, outlaws,

and cutthroats used to have their hiding-place. It's a tangled up stretch o' mountain, so wild, so rocky, and so full of caves that they could have hid there till Judgment-day from all Montana. Yes, that's where they used to hang out."

"Used to?"

"Yes, 'cause I ain't heard much uv them fur some time. They came down in the valley and tried to stampede them new blooded horses from Kentucky on Sifton's ranch, but Sifton and his men were waitin', and when the smoke cleared away most uv the gang was wiped out. Red and two or three uv his fellers got away, but I ain't heard uv 'em since. Guess they've scattered."

"Wisest thing they could do," said Harley.

The guide made no answer, and they plodded on in silence until about two o'clock in the afternoon, when they stopped in a little cove to eat luncheon and refresh their horses.

It was the first grateful spot that they had seen in hours. A brook fed by the snows above formed a pool in the hollow, and then, overflowing it, dropped down the mountain wall. But in this

sheltered nook and around the life-giving water green grass was growing, and there was a rim of goodly trees. The horses, when their riders dismounted, grazed eagerly, and the men themselves lay upon the grass and ate with deep content.

“Shall we reach Crow’s Wing by dark?” asked the Candidate of the guide.

Jim had risen, and, standing at the edge of the cove, was gazing out over the rolling sea of mountains. Harley noticed a troubled look on his face.

“If things go right we kin,” he replied: “bit I ain’t shore that things will go right.”

“What do you mean?”

“Do you see that brown spot down there in the southwest just a-top the hills? Wa’al it’s a cloud, an’ it’s comin’ this way. Clouds, you know, always hev somethin’ in ’em.”

“That is to say, we shall have rain,” said the Candidate. “Let it come. We have been rained on too often to mind such a little thing, eh, Harley?”

The correspondent nodded.

“I don’t think it’ll be rain,” said the guide. “We are so high up here that more’n likely it’ll be snow. An’ when there’s a snowstorm in the mountains you can’t go climbin’ along the side o’ cliffs.”

The others too now looked grave. They had not foreseen such a difficulty, but the guide came to their relief with more cheering words; after all, the cloud might not continue to grow, “An’ it ain’t worth while to holler afore we’re hit.”

This seemed sound philosophy to the others, and dismissing their cares, they started again, much refreshed by their stop in the little cove. The road now grew rougher, the guide leading and the rest following in single file. By and by their cares returned. Harley glanced toward the southwest and saw there the same cloud, but now much bigger, blacker, and more threatening. The sunshine was gone and the wrinkled surface of the mountains was gray and sombre. The air had grown cold, and down among the clefts there was a weird, moaning wind. Harley glanced at the guide and noticed that his face was now decidedly anxious. But the correspondent said

nothing. Part of his strength lay in his ability to wait, and he knew that the guide would speak in good time.

Another hour passed and the air grew darker and colder. Then Jim stopped.

“Gentlemen,” he said, “there’s a snowstorm comin’ soon. I didn’t expect one so early even on the mountains, but it’s comin’ anyhow, an’ if we keep on for Crow’s Wing they’ll have to dig our bones out o’ the meltin’ drifts next summer. We’ve got to make for Queen City.”

“Queen City!” exclaimed Mr. Heathcote. “I didn’t know there was another town anywhere near here.”

“She’s a-standin’ all the same.” replied the guide, brusquely, “an’ I wouldn’t never hev started on the trip to Crow’s Wing if there hadn’t been such a stoppin’-place betwixt an’ between, in case o’ trouble with the weather. An’ let me whisper to you, Queen City’s quite a sizable place. We’ll pass the night there. It’s got a fine hotel, the finest an’ biggest in the mountains.”

He looked grimly at Mr. Heathcote, as much as

to say, "Ask me as much more as you please, but I'll answer you nothing."

Something cold and damp touched Harley's cheek. He looked up, and another flake of snow, descending softly, settled upon his face. The clouds rolled over them, heavy and dark, and shut out all the mountains save a little island where they stood. The snow, following the first few flakes, fell softly but rapidly.

"It's Queen City, or moulderin' in the drifts till next summer!" cried Jim, and he turned his horse into a side path. The others followed without a word, willing to accept his guidance through the greatest danger they had yet faced in an arduous campaign. Despite the danger, which he knew to be heavy and pressing, Harley's curiosity was aroused, and he wished to ask more of Queen City, but the saturnine face of the guide was not inviting. Nevertheless, he risked one question.

"How far is this place, Queen City?" he asked.

"'Bout two miles," replied Jim, with what seemed to Harley a derisive grin, "an' it's tarnal lucky for us that it's so near."

Harley
said no
more, but
he was
satisfied
with
nothing
in the
guide's



Two miles to go

reply save the fact that the town was only two miles away; any shelter would be welcome, because he saw now that a snowstorm on the wild mountains was a terrible thing.

The guide led on, Jimmy Grayson with bent head followed; Mr. Heathcote, shrunk in his saddle, came next, and Harley, who had dropped back, brought up the rear. Now and then the vast veil of snow parted before the wind, as if cleft down the centre by a sword-blade, and the correspondent looked upon a grand and awful sight. Before him were all the peaks and ridges rising in white cones and pillars against the cloudy sky, and the effect was of distance and sublimity. From the clefts and ravines came a

desolate moaning. Harley felt that he was much nearer to the eternal here than he could ever be in the plains. Then the rent veil would close again, and he saw only his three comrades and the rocks twenty feet away.

They turned around the base of a cliff, rising hundreds of feet above them, and Harley caught the dull red glare of brick walls showing through the falling snow. He was ready to raise a shout of joy. This he knew was Queen City, lying snugly in its wide valley. There was the typical, single mountain street, with its row of buildings on either side; the big one near-by was certainly the hotel and the other big one farther on was as certainly the opera-house. But nobody was in the streets, and the whole town was dark; not a light appeared at a single window, although the night had now come.

Harley rode up by the side of the guide.

“The place looks lonesome,” he said.

“Maybe they’ve all gone to bed; there ain’t anythin’ here to keep ’em awake,” replied the guide, with the old puzzling and derisive smile.

Harley turned coldly away. He did not like for any one to make fun of him, and that he saw clearly was the guide's intention. Jimmy Grayson was still thinking of things far away, and Mr. Heathcote, chilled and shrunk, seemed to have lost the power of speech.

The guide rode slowly toward the large brick building that Harley took to be the hotel, and at that moment the snow slackened for a little while; the last rays of the setting sun struck upon the brick walls and gilded them with red tracery; some panes of glass gave back the ruddy glare, but mostly the windows were bare and empty, like eyeless sockets. Harley looked farther, and all the other buildings—the opera-house, the stoves, and the residences—were the same, desolate and decaying. About the place were snow-covered heaps, evidently the refuse of mining operations, but they saw no human being.

The effect upon all save the guide was startling. Harley saw the look of chilled wonder grow on Jimmy Grayson's face. Mr. Heathcote raised himself in his saddle and stared, uncomprehending. Harley had been deep in the

desert, but never before had he seen such desolation and ruin, because here was the body, but all life had gone from it. He felt as one alone with ghosts. The guide laughed dryly.

“You guessed it,” he said, looking at Harley. “It’s a dead city. Queen City has been as dead as Adam these half-dozen years. When the mines played out it died; there was no earthly use for Queen City any longer, and by and by everybody went away. But I’ve seen the old town when it was alive! Five thousand people here. Money a-flowin’; drinks passin’ over the counter one way and the coin the other, the gamblin’-houses an’ the theatre chock-full, an’ women, any kind you please. But there ain’t a soul left now.”

The snow thinned still more, and the buildings rose before them, gaunt and grim.

“We’ll stop to-night at the Grand Hotel—that is, if they ain’t too much crowded,” said the guide, who had had his little joke, and who now wished to serve his employers as best he could. “But first we’ll take the horses into the dinin’-room; nobody will object, I’ve done it afore.”

He rode toward a side door, but over the main entrance Harley saw in tessellated letters the words "Grand Hotel," and he tried to shake off the feeling of weirdness that it gave him.

The door to the dining-room, which was almost level with the earth, was gone, and with some driving the horses were persuaded to enter. They were tethered there, sheltered from the storm, and when they moved their feet rumbled hollowly on the wooden floor. The Candidate and his two friends, driven by the same impulse, turned back into the snow and re-entered the house by the front door.

They passed into a wide hall, and at the far end they saw the clerk's desk. Lying upon the desk were some fragments of paper fastened to a chain, and Harley knew that it was what was left of the hotel register. It spoke so vividly of both life and death that the three stopped.

"Would you like to register, Mr. Grayson?" asked Harley, wishing to relieve the tension.

The Candidate laughed mirthlessly.

"Not to-night, Harley," he said, "but gloomy as

the place is we ought to be thankful that we have found it. See how the storm is rising.”

The snow drove in at the unsheltered windows, and a long whine arose as the wind whirled around the old house. The guide came in with cheerful bustle and stamp of feet.

“Don’t linger here, gentlemen,” he said. “The house is yours; come into the parlor. We’ve had a piece of luck. Now and then a lone tramp or a miner seeks shelter in this town, just as we have done; they come mostly to the hotel, and some feller who gathered up wood failed to burn it all. I’ll have a fire in the parlor in five minutes, and then we can ring for hot drinks and a warm dinner. I’ll take straight whiskey, an’ after that I ain’t partic’ler whether I get patty-de-foy-graw or hummin’-bird tongues.”

His good humor was infectious, and they were thankful too for the shelter, desolate though the place was. All the wood had been stripped away except the floors, and the brick walls were bare. In the great parlor they had nothing to sit on save their saddles, but it was a noble apartment, many feet square, built for a time when there was life in

Queen City.

“I’ve heard the Governor of Montana speak to more than two hundred people in this very room.” said Jim, reminiscently. “He was to have spoke in the public square, but snow come up, an’ Bill Fosdick, who run the hotel and run her wide open, invited ’em all right in here, an’ they come.”

Harley could well believe it, knowing, as he did, the miners and the mountains and by report early Montana.

At one end of the room was an immense grate, and in this Jim heaped the wood so generously left by the unknown tramp or miner, igniting it with a ready match. The ruddy blaze leaped upward and threw generous shadows on the floor. The men, sitting close to it, felt the grateful warmth and were content.

“An old hand travellin’ in the mountains always purvides for a snowy day,” said the guide, and he took from his saddle-bags much food and a large bottle.

They drank a little and ate heartily. The last

touch of cold departed, and the fire still sparkled with good cheer, casting its comforting shadows across the stained floor.

“I’ve brought in the horse blankets,” said the guide, “an’ with them under us, our overcoats over us, an’ the fire afore us we ought to sleep here as snug an’ as warm as a beaver in its house.”

Harley walked to the window and looked out. The night was black, save for the driving snow, and when he glanced back at the room it seemed a very haven of delight. But the strangeness of their situation, the weird effect of the dead city, with the ghost-like shapes of its houses showing through the snow, was upon his nerves, and he did not feel sleepy.

Muttering some excuse to the others he went into the hall. It was dark, and a gust of cold air from the open window at the end struck him in the face. At the same moment Harley saw what he took to be a light farther down the hall, but when he looked again it was gone.

It might be a delusion, but the matter troubled

him; if a lone tramp or miner were in the building he wished to know. Any stranger would have a right in the hotel, but there was comradeship and welcome in Jimmy Grayson's party.

Harley's instinct said that all was not right, and taking off his boots he crept down the hall and among the cross halls with noiseless feet. He did not see the light again, but he heard in another room the hum of voices, softened so that they might not reach anyone save those for whom they were intended. But they reached Harley, crouching just behind the edge of the door, and, hearing, he shuddered. A great danger threatened the nominee for the Presidency of the United States. Such a thing as the present had never before happened in the history of the country.

The door was still on its hinges, and it was still slightly ajar. Harley, peeping through the crack, saw the faint light from the window, saw the five occupants of the room, and because the man who did the talking and who showed himself so evidently the leader had red hair he knew him instinctively. It was Red Leary and the remnant of his gang, not scattered to the winds of the

West, as Jim and everyone else had thought, but here in Montana in their old haunts. And Harley, listening to their talk, measured the extent of their knowledge, which was far too much; they knew who Jimmy Grayson was, they had known of his departure from Blue Earth, and they had followed him here; presently they would take him away and the whole world would be thrilled. No such prize had ever fallen into the hands of robbers in America, and it would be worth a million to them.

Harley was in a chill as he listened, and then his professional instinct leaped up. What a tremendous piece of news the kidnapping and holding of Jimmy Grayson for ransom would be! And he alone—if he survived—would have it. But it was only a momentary thrill; above it and beyond it swelled his sense of comradeship and duty and of devotion to the man whom he had come to regard as his chief. The Candidate must be saved!

But Harley, thinking his hardest, could not think how. There were five men well armed in the room before him; the guide probably had a pistol,

but he had none, and he was sure that Jimmy Grayson and Mr. Heathcote were without them. He paused there a long time, undecided, and at last he crept down the hall again and toward the great parlor. Then he put on his boots, re-entered the room, and spoke in a low voice to his comrades.

The guide's fighting blood was on fire at once. "I've a revolver," he said; "we kin barricade the room and hold them off. There are but two windows here, opening out on the snow, but they are so high they can hardly reach 'em with their hands. We kin make a good fight of it."

"No," said Jimmy Grayson, "there's not a shot to be fired, because I've a better plan. How long do you think it will be before they come for me, Harley?"

"About fifteen minutes I should say, at least that is what I gathered from their talk."

"And they have not examined the building or the town?"

"No, they merely came down the trail behind us and slipped into that room, waiting their

chance.”

“Very good. Jim, you told me a while ago that the Governor of Montana once spoke to two hundred people in this room; it was a fortunate remark of yours, because I shall speak to as many people to-night in this same room. Shut the door there, put the saddles before it, and then build the fire as high as possible.”

A Desperate Expedient

The Candidate’s voice was sharp, decisive, and full of command. The born leader of men was asserting himself, and the guide, without pausing to reason, hastened to obey. He shut the door, put the saddles before it, and heaped upon the fire all the remaining wood, except a stump, reserved by Jimmy Grayson’s express command. The fire leaped higher and the room was brilliantly lighted.

Jimmy Grayson stood by, erect, calm, and grave.

“Now, gentlemen.” he said, “you are a crowd, come from Crow’s Wing to meet me here and to hear what I have to say. I trust that you will like

it, and indicate your liking by your applause.”

The stump was placed in the middle of the floor, and Jimmy Grayson stepped upon it. His face at that height was visible through the window to anyone outside, although the others would be hidden. Just as he took his place Harley thought he heard the soft crunch of a footstep on the snow beneath the window. He felt a burning curiosity to rise and look out. but he restrained it and did not move. The guide was staring at the Candidate in open-mouthed amazement, but he too did not speak. A few big white flakes drove in at the open window, but they did not reach the men before the fire that blazed so brightly. Harley again thought he heard the soft shuffle of footsteps on the snow outside, but then the burning wood crackled merrily and Jimmy Grayson was about to speak.

The Great Speech

“Gentlemen of Crow’s Wing,” said the Candidate, in his full, penetrating voice that the empty old building gave back in many an echo, “it is indeed a pleasure to me to meet you here. The circumstances, the situation are such as to

inspire any man who has been so honored. I should like to have seen your little town, the home of brave and honest men, nestling as it does among these mighty mountains and far from the rest of the world, but strong and self-reliant. I appreciate too your kindness and your thought for me. Seeing the advance of the storm and knowing its dangers, you have come to meet me in this place, once so full of life. I find something singularly appealing and pathetic in this. Once again, if only for a brief space, Queen City shall ring with human voices and the human tread.”

The Candidate paused a moment, as if the end of a rounded period had come and he were gathering strength for another. Then suddenly arose a mighty chorus of applause. It was Harley, Heathcote, and Jim, and their act was spontaneous, the inspiration of the moment, drawn from Jimmy Grayson’s own inspiration. The guide beat upon the floor with both hands and both feet, and the other two were not less active. Moreover, the guide opened his mouth and let forth a yell, rapid, cumulative, and so full of volume that it sounded like the whoop of at

least a half-dozen men. The room resounded with the applause, and it thundered down the halls of the great empty building. When it died, Harley, listening again intently heard once more the crush of feet on the snow outside, but now it was a rapid movement, as if of surprise. But the sound came to him only a moment, because the Candidate was speaking once more and he was worth hearing.

As an orator Jimmy Grayson was always good, but sometimes he was better than at other times, and to-night was one of his best times. The audience from Crow's Wing, the consideration they had shown in meeting him here in the dead city, and the wildness of the night outside seemed to inspire him. He showed the greatest familiarity with the life of the mountains and the needs of the miners; he was one of them, he sympathized with them, he entered their homes, and if he could he would make their lives brighter.

Never had the Candidate spoken to a more appreciative audience. With foot and hand and voice it thundered its applause; the building echoed with it, and all the time the fire burned

higher and higher, and the merry crackling of the wood was a minor note in the chorus of applause. But Jimmy Grayson's own voice was like an organ, every key of which he played, it expressed every human emotion; full and swelling it rose above the applause, and Harley, watching his expressive face, saw that he felt these emotions. Once he believed that the Candidate, carried away by his own feelings, had become oblivious of time and place and thought now only of the troubles and needs of the mountain men.

The Enemy Routed

Harley's attention turned once more to the windows. He thought what a lucky chance it was that no one standing on the ground outside was high enough to look through them into the room. He blessed the unknown builder, and then he tried to hear that familiar shuffle on the snow, but he did not hear it again.

Jimmy Grayson spoke on and on, and the applause kept pace, until at last the guide slipped quietly from the room. When he returned a quarter of an hour later the Candidate was still speaking, but Jim gave him a signal look and he

stopped abruptly.

“They are gone,” said Jim. “They must have been gone a full hour. The snow has stopped, and I guess they are at least ten miles from here, runnin’ for their lives. They knew that if the men of Crow’s Wing put hands on ’em they’d be hangin’ from a limb ten minutes after.”

Jimmy Grayson sank down on the stump, exhausted, and wiped his hot face.

“Say, Mr. Harley,” whispered the guide to the correspondent, “I’ve heard some great speeches in my time, but to-night’s was the greatest.”

The Candidate spoke the next day at Crow’s Wing, and his audience was delighted. But Jim was right. The speech was not as great as the one he made at Queen City.



The Spellbinder

When the special train, bearing the Presidential nominee, made its great loop down through Wyoming and Nebraska, into the central regions of Kansas, where the land rolls away like the waves of the sea and is covered in due season with fields of grain, they came once more into a country abounding in men, and passed little towns, which rose quickly one after another from the prairie.

“And this is Kansas, the home of cranks!” said Churchill.

“I think it is a good thing for a State to have cranks,” said Harley. “It indicates thought and an attempt to solve important problems. Every tree that bears much fruit has some good mixed with the bad.”

“How beautifully metaphorical and allegorical we are becoming!” exclaimed Churchill.

Harley made no rejoinder—he had grown used to Churchill’s cynicism, and returned to his old task of watching the people, who were an unfailing source of interest to him. He had early noticed the difference between the East and the West. The West, wholly detached from the Old World, while the East was not, put its stamp upon its new inhabitants much more quickly, and the whole region seemed to him to have a flavor, lacking in the older and slower East. Moreover, there could be no doubt of its democracy, because every day brought new proofs—it was as much a part of the people’s lives as the pure air of the prairies that flowed through their lungs.

The train was continually thronged with local politicians and others, anxious to see the Candidate, and at a little station in a wheat-field that seemed to have no end they picked up three men, one of whom attracted Harley’s notice at once. He was young, only twenty-four or five, with a bright, quick, eager face, and he was not dressed in the usual careless Western fashion. His trousers were carefully creased, his white shirt was well laundered, and his tie was neat. But he

wore that strange combination—not so strange west of the Mississippi—a sack coat and a silk hat at the same time.

The youth was not at all shy, and he early obtained an introduction to Mr. Grayson. Harley thus learned that his name was Moore, Charles Moore, or Charlie, as those with him called him. Most men in the West, unless of special prominence, when presented to Jimmy Grayson merely shook hands, exchanged a word on any convenient topic, and then gave way to others, but this fledgling sought to hold him in long converse on the most vital questions of the campaign.

“That was a fine speech of yours you made at Butte, Mr. Grayson,” he said in the most impulsive manner, “and I indorse every word of it; but are you sure that what you said about Canadian reciprocity will help our party in the great wheat States, such as Minnesota and the Dakotas?”

The Candidate stared at him at first in surprise and some displeasure, but in a moment or two his gaze was changed into a kindly smile. He read

well the youth before him. his amusing confidence, his eagerness, and his self-importance that had not yet received a rude check.

“There is something in what you say, Mr. Moore,” replied Jimmy Grayson, in the tone absolutely without condescension that made every man his friend, “but I have considered it, and I think it is better for me to stick to my text. Besides, I am right, you know.”

“Ah, yes, but that is not the point.” exclaimed young Mr. Moore. “One may be right, but one also might keep silent on a doubtful point that is likely to influence many votes. And there are several things in your speeches, Mr. Grayson. with which some of us do not agree. I shall have occasion to address the public concerning them, as you know a number of us are to speak with you while you are passing through Kansas.”

There was a flash in Jimmy Grayson’s eye, but Harley could not tell whether it expressed anger or amused contempt. It was gone in a moment, however, and the Candidate was again looking at the fledgling with a kindly, smiling, and tolerant

gaze. But Churchill had thrust his elbow against Harley.

“Oh, the child of the fine and bounding West!” he murmured. “What innocence and what a sense of majesty and power!”

Harley did not deign a reply, but he made the acquaintance by and by of the men who had joined the train with Moore. One of them was a country judge named Bassett, sensible and middle-aged, and he talked freely about the fledgling, whom he seemed to have, in a measure, on his mind. He laughed at first when he spoke of the subject, but he soon became serious.

“Charlie is a good boy,” he said, “but what do you think he is, or, rather, what do you think he thinks he is?”

“I don’t know,” replied Harley.

“Charlie thinks he is a spellbinder, the greatest ever. He’s dreaming by night, and by day too, that he’s the West’s most wonderful orator, and that he’s to swing the thousands with his words. He’s a coming Henry Clay and Daniel Webster rolled

into one. He's read that story about Demosthenes holding the pebble in his mouth, to make himself talk good, and they do say that he slips away out on the prairie, where there's nobody about, and, with a stone in his mouth, tries to beat the old Greek at his own game. I don't vouch for the truth of the story, but I believe it."

Harley could not keep from smiling. "Well, it's at least an honest ambition," he said.

"I don't know about that," replied the judge, doubtfully, "not in Charlie's case, because as a spellbinder he isn't worth shucks. He can't speak, and he'll never learn to do it. Besides, he's leaving a thing he was just made for to chase a rainbow, and it's breaking his old daddy's heart."

"What is it that he was made for?"

"He's a born telegraph operator. He's one of the best ever known in the West. They say that at eighteen he was the swiftest in Kansas. Then he went down to Kansas City, and he got along great; now he's give up a job that was paying him a hundred and fifty a month to start this foolishness. They say he might be a great

inventor, too, and here he is trying to speak on politics, when he doesn't know anything about public questions—and he doesn't know how to talk, either. I don't know whether to be mad about it, or just to feel sorry—because Charlie's father is an old friend of mine.”

Harley showed his feelings. He had seen the round peg in the square hole so many times, with bad results to both the peg and the hole, that every fresh instance grieved him. He was also confirmed in the soundness of Judge Bassett's opinion by his observation of young Moore, as the journey proceeded. The new spellbinder was anxious to speak, whenever there was an occasion, and often when there was none at all. The discouragement and now and then the open rebukes of his elders could not suppress him. The correspondents, comparing notes, decided that they had never before seen so strong a rage for speaking. He took the whole field of public affairs for his range. He was willing at any time to discuss the tariff, internal revenue, finance, and foreign relations, and avowed himself master of all. Yet Harley saw that he was in these affairs a

perfect child, shallow and superficial, and depending wholly upon a few catchwords that he had learned from others. Even the former Populists turned from him. Yet their sour faces when he spoke taught him nothing. He was still, to himself, the great spellbinder, and he looked forward to the day when he, too, a nominee for the Presidency, should charm the multitudes with his eloquence and logic. He had no hesitation in confiding his hopes to Harley. and the correspondent longed to tell him how he misjudged himself, yet he refrained, knowing that it was not his duty, and that even if it were, his words would make no impression.

But in other matters than those of public life and oratory Jimmy Grayson's people found young Moore likely enough. He was helpful on the train; now and then when the telegraph operators had more material than they could handle he gave them valuable aid; he was a fine comrade, taking good luck and bad luck with equal philosophy and never complaining. "If only he wouldn't try to speak," groaned Hobart, for whom he sent a telegraphic message with skill

and despatch.

But that very afternoon Moore talked to them on the subject of national finance until they fell into a rage and left the car. That evening Harley was sitting with the Candidate when an old man, bent of figure and gloomy of face, came to them.

“I beg your pardon. Mr. Grayson,” he said. “for intruding on you. but I’ve come to ask a favor. I’m Henry Moore, of Council Grove, the father of Charlie Moore, who was the best telegraph operator in Kansas City, and who is now the poorest public speaker in Kansas.”

The old man smiled, but it was a sad smile. Jimmy Grayson was full of sympathy, and he shook Mr. Moore’s hand warmly.

“I know your son,” he said—“a bright boy.”

“Yes, he’s nothing but a boy,” said his father, as if seeking an excuse. “I suppose all boys must have their foolish spells, but he appears to have his mighty hard and long.”

The old man sighed, and the look of sympathy on Jimmy Grayson’s face deepened.

“Charlie is a good boy,” continued Mr. Moore.

“and if he could have this foolish notion knocked out of his head—there’s no other way to get it out—he would be all right, and that’s why I’ve come to you. You know you are to speak at Topeka tomorrow night, in a big hall, and one of the biggest crowds in the West will be there to hear you. Two or three speakers are to follow you, and what do you think that son of mine has done? Somehow or other he has got the committee to put him on the programme right after you, and he says he is going to demolish what he calls your fallacies.”

Harley saw the Candidate’s lips curve a little as if he were about to smile, but the movement was quickly checked. Jimmy Grayson would not willingly hurt the feelings of any man.

“Your boy has that right,” he said to Mr. Moore.

“No, he hasn’t!” burst out the old man. “A boy hasn’t any right to be so light-headed, and I want you, Mr. Grayson, when he has finished his speech, to come right back at him and wipe him off the face of the earth. It will be an easy thing for so big a man as you to do. Charlie doesn’t

know a thing about public affairs. He'll make lots of statements, and every one of 'em will be wrong. Just show him up! Make all the people laugh at him! Just sting him with your words until he turns red in the face! Roll him in the dust and tread on him till he can't breathe! Then hold him up before all that audience as the biggest and the wildest fool that ever came on a stage. Nothing else will cure him; it will be a favor to him and to me, and I, who love him more than anybody else ask you to do it."

Harley was tempted to smile, and at the same moment tears came into his eyes. No one could fail to be moved by the old man's intense earnestness, his florid and mixed imagery, and his appealing look. Certainly Jimmy Grayson was no exception. He glanced at Harley, and saw his expression of sympathy, but the correspondent made no suggestion.

"I appreciate your feelings and your position, Mr. Moore," he said, "but this is a hard thing that you ask me to do. I cannot trample upon a boy, even metaphorically, in the presence of five thousand people. What would they think of me?"

“They’ll understand. They’ll know why it’s done, and they’ll like you for it. It’s the only way, Mr. Grayson! Either you do it or my boy’s life is ruined!”

Jimmy Grayson walked up and down the room and his face was troubled. He looked again and again at Harley, but the correspondent made no suggestion. At last he stopped.

“I think I can save your son, and promise to make the trial, but I will not say a word more at present. Now don’t ask me anything about it, and never mind the thanks—I understand; maybe I shall have a grown son myself some day to be turned from the wrong path. Good night. I’ll see you again at Topeka. Harley, I wish you would stay a while longer. I want to have further talk with you.”

The Candidate and Harley were in deep converse for some time, and when they finished much of the trouble had disappeared from Jimmy Grayson’s eyes.

“I think it can be done,” he said.

“So do I,” repeated Harley, with confidence.

The next day, which was occupied with the run down to Topeka and occasional stops for speeches at way stations, was uneventful save for the growing obsession of Charlie Moore. He was overflowing with pride and importance. That night in the presence of five thousand people he was going to reply to the great Jimmy Grayson, and to show to them and to him his errors. Mr. Grayson was sound in most things, but there were several in which he should be set right, and he, Charlie Moore, was the man to do it for him. He was suppressed, however, for a few moments only, and then said them over again to the others.

The fledgling proudly produced several printed programmes with his name next to that of the Candidate, and talked to the correspondents of the main points that he would make, until they fled into the next car. But he followed them there, and asked them if they would not like to take in advance a synopsis of his speech in order that they might be sure to telegraph it to their offices in time. All evaded the issue except Harley, who gravely jotted down the synopsis, and, with equal gravity, returned his thanks for Mr. Moore's

consideration.

“I knew you wouldn’t want to miss it.” said the youth; “I come on late, you know, and, besides, I remembered that the difference in time between here and New York is against us.”

Mr. Moore, the father, was on the train throughout the day, but he did not speak to his son. He spent his time in the car in which Jimmy Grayson sat, always silent, but always looking with appeal and pathos at the great leader. His eyes said plainly: “Mr. Grayson, you will not fail me, will you? You will save my son? You will beat him and tread on him until he hasn’t left a single thought of being a famous orator and public leader? Then he will return to the work for which God made him.”

Harley would look at the old man a while, and then return to the next car, where the youth was chattering away to those who could not escape him.

The speech in Topeka was to be of the utmost importance, not alone to those whose own ears would hear it, but to the whole Union, because

the Candidate would make a plain declaration upon a number of vexed questions that had been raised within the last week or two. This had been announced in all the press on the authority of Jimmy Grayson himself, and the speech, in full, not a word missing, would have to be telegraphed to all the great newspapers, East and West.

On such important campaigns as that of a Presidential nominee the two great telegraph companies always sent operators with the correspondents in order that they might despatch long messages from small way stations, where the local men were not used to such heavy work. Now Harley and his associates had with them two veterans, Barr and Wynand, from Chicago, who never failed them. They were relieved, too, on reaching Topeka to find that the committee in charge had been most considerate. Some forethoughtful man, whom the correspondents blessed, had remembered the two hours difference in time between Topeka and New York, and against New York, and he had run two wires directly into the hall, and into a private box on the left, where Barr and Wynand could work

the instruments, so far from the stage that the clicking would not disturb Jimmy Grayson or anybody else, but would save much time for the correspondents.

The audience gathered early, and it was a splendid Western crowd, big-boned and tanned with the Western winds.

“They have cranks out here, but it’s a land of strong men, don’t you forget that!” said Harley to Churchill, and Churchill did not attempt a sarcastic reply.

They were both sitting at the edge of the stage, and in front of them, nearer the footlights, was young Moore, proud and eager, his fingers moving nervously. His father, too, had found a seat on the stage, but he was in the background, next to the scenery, and being behind the others he was not visible from the floor of the house. There he sat, staring gloomily at his son, and now and then, with a sort of despairing hope, at Jimmy Grayson.

There were some short preliminary speeches and introductions, and then came the turn of the

Candidate. The usual flutter of expectation ran over the audience, followed by the usual deep hush, but just at that moment there was an interruption. A boy, in the uniform of a telegraph company, hurried upon the stage.

“You must come at once, sir,” he said. “Mr. Wynand hasn’t turned up! We don’t know what’s become of him! And Mr. Barr has took sick, sudden and bad. The Topeka manager says he’ll get some one here as quick as he can, but he can’t do it under half an hour, anyway!”

The other correspondents stared at each other in dismay, and then at the hired stenographer who was to take down the speech in full. But Harley, always thoughtful and resourceful, rose at once to the crisis. He had noticed Moore lift his head with an expression of lively interest at the news of the disaster, and stepping forward at once he put his hand on the fledgling’s shoulder.

“Mr. Moore,” he exclaimed, in stirring appeal, “this is a crisis and you must save us! You have eaten with us and you have lived with us, and you cannot desert us now! We have all heard that you are a great operator, the greatest in the West! You

must take Mr. Grayson's speech! What a triumph it will be for you to send what he says and then get upon the stage and demolish it afterwards!"

The feeling in Harley's voice was real, and the boy was thrilled by it and the situation. Every natural impulse in him responded. It was the chivalrous thing for him to do, and an easy one. He could send a speech as fast as the fastest man living could deliver it. He rose without a word, his heart thrilling with thoughts of the coming battle, in which he felt proudly that he would be a victor, and made his way to the telegrapher's box.

Moore was a Topeka boy, and nearly everybody in the audience knew him. When they saw him take his seat at one of the instruments their quick Western minds divined what he was going to do, and the roar of applause that they had just given to the Candidate, who was now on his feet, was succeeded by another, but the second was for Charlie the telegraph operator.

The fledgling had no time to think. He had scarcely settled himself in his chair when the deep, full voice of Jimmy Grayson filled the great hall, and he was launched upon a speech for

which the
whole
Union
was
waiting.
The
shorthand
man was
already
deep in
his work
and the
copy
began to



At the telegraph

come. But the boy felt no alarm; he was not even fluttered; the feel of the key was good, and the atmosphere of that box which enclosed the telegraph apparatus came sweet to his nostrils. He called up Kansas City, from which the speech would be repeated to the greater cities, and with a sigh of deep satisfaction settled to his task.

They tell yet in Western cities of Charlie Moore's great exploit. The Candidate was in splendid form that night and his speech came

rushing forth in a torrent. The missing Wynand was still missing and the luckless Barr was still ill, but the fledgling sat alone in the box. his face bent over the key, oblivious to the world around him, and sent it all. Through him ran the fire of battle and great endeavor. He heard the call and replied. He never missed a word. He sent them hot across the prairie, over the slopes and ridges, and across the muddy Kaw into Kansas City. And there in the general office the manager muttered more than once:

“That fellow is doing great work! How he saves time!”

The audience liked Jimmy Grayson’s speech, and again and again the applause swelled and echoed. Then they noticed how the boy in the telegrapher’s box—a boy of their own—was working. Mysterious voices, too, began to spread, among them the news that Charlie Moore had saved the day, or, rather, the night, and now and then in Jimmy Grayson’s pauses, cries of “Good boy, Charlie!” arose.

Harley, while doing his writing, nevertheless kept a keen eye upon all the actors in the drama.

He saw the light of hope appear more strongly upon old man Moore's face, and then turn into a glow as he beheld his son doing so well.



The

The Candidate spoke on and on
Candidate spoke on and on. He had begun at nine o'clock, but it was a great and important speech, and no one left the hall. Eleven o'clock and then midnight, and Jimmy Grayson was still speaking. But it was not his night alone; it belonged to two men, and the other partner was Charlie Moore,

who fulfilled his task equally well, and whom the audience still noticed.

The boy was thinking only of his duty that he was doing so well. The victory was his, as he knew that it would be. He kept even with the speech. Hardly had the last word of the sentence left Jimmy Grayson's lips before the first of it was flying to Kansas City, and in newspaper offices, fifteen hundred miles away, they were putting every paragraph in type before it was a half hour old.

The boy, by and by, as the words passed before him on the written page, began to notice what a great speech it was. How the sentences went to the heart of things! How luminous and striking was the phraseology! And around him he heard, as if in a dream, the liquid notes of that wonderful golden voice. Suddenly, like a stroke of lightning, he realized how empty were his own thoughts, how bare and hard his speech, and how thin and flat his voice. His heart sank, with a plunge, and then rose again as his fingers touched the familiar key, and the answering touch thrilled back through his body. He glanced at the

audience and saw many faces gazing up at him, and on their faces was a peculiar look. Again the thrill ran through him, and, bending his head lower, he sent the words faster than ever on their Eastern journey.

At last Jimmy Grayson stopped, and then the audience roared its applause for the speaker, and when the echoes died, someone—it was Judge Bassett—sprang upon a chair and exclaimed:

“Gentlemen, we have cheered Mr. Grayson, and he deserves it, but there is another whom we ought to cheer too. You have seen Charlie Moore, a Topeka boy, one of our own there in the box, sending the speech to the world that was waiting for it. Perhaps you do not know that if he had not helped us to-night the world would have had to wait too long.”

They dragged young Moore, amid the cheers, upon the stage, and then when the hush came the Candidate said:

“You seem to know him already, but as all the speaking of the evening is now over, I wish to introduce to you again Mr. Charlie Moore, the

greatest telegraph operator in the West, the genius of the key, a man destined to rise to the highest place in his profession.”

When the last echo of the last cheer died there died with it the last ambition of Charlie Moore to be a spellbinder, and straight before him—broad, smooth, and alluring—lay the road for which his feet were fitted.

But the words most grateful to Jimmy Grayson were the thanks of the fledgling’s old father.



● Credits

"His Greatest Speech"

Harper's Monthly magazine, June, 1902.

This later became the basis for chapter 7 of Altsheler's novel "The Candidate."

"Jimmy Grayson's Spell"

Harper's Weekly magazine, August 15,

1903. This later became the basis for chapter 9 of Altsheler's novel "The Candidate."

"A Dawn in the Desert"

Two installments in *Harper's Weekly* magazines, July 25 and August 1, 1903.

"The Third Degree"

Harper's Weekly magazine, August 22,

1903. It later became the basis for chapter 13 of Altsheler's novel "The Candidate."

"A Dead City"

Harper's Weekly magazine, October 24,

1903 by Harper & Brothers. It later became the basis for chapter 14 of "The Candidate."

"The Spellbinder"

Harper's Weekly magazine, October 29,
1904. This later became the basis for chapter
17 of "The Candidate."

