

COUNSEL FOR THE DEFENSE*

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V

FOR a long space after Bruce had gone, Katherine sat beside her father on the old hair-cloth sofa, holding his hands tightly and caressingly. Her words poured hotly from her lips—words of love for him, of resentment at the injustice which he suffered, and, fiercest of all, of wrath against Bruce, who had so ruthlessly, and for such selfish ends, incited the popular feeling against him.

She would make such a fight as Westville had never seen! She would show those lawyers who had been reduced to cowards by Bruce's demagoguery! She would bring the town in humiliation to her father's feet!

But emotion has not only peaks, but plains and valleys. As she cooled, and her passion descended to a less exalted level, she began to see the difficulties of the rôle she had so impulsively accepted, and her unfitness for it. As she had told Blake, she had never handled a case alone in court. True, she had been admitted to the bar two years before, but her duties with the Municipal League had consisted almost entirely in working up evidence in cases of municipal corruption for the use of her legal superiors. An untried lawyer, and a woman lawyer at that—surely a weak reed for her father to lean upon.

But she had thrown down the gage of battle; she had to fight, since there was no other champion; and even in this hour of emotion, when tears were so plentiful and every word was accompanied by a caress, she began to plan the preliminaries of her struggle.

"I shall write to-night to the league for a leave of absence," she said. "One of the things I must see to at once is to get admitted to the State bar. Do you know when your case is to come up?"

"It has been put over to the September term of court," her father replied.

"That gives me four months."

"After the New York examination, you ought to find ours easy."

"Yes, I think I can squeeze through somehow." She was silently thoughtful for a space. "In the mean time, I've got to work hard, hard, upon your case. As I see it now, I am inclined to agree with you that the situation has arisen from a misunderstanding—that the agent thought you expected a bribe, while you thought the money was a small donation to the hospital."

"That's just how it was," said her father.

"Then the thing to do is to see Dr. Sherman, and if possible the agent, have them repeat their testimony, and try to search out in it some clue to the mistake. I will do it at once."

Katherine acted promptly on this idea. Leaving her father's house, and walking for about ten minutes through the quiet, maple-shaded back streets, she reached the Wabash Avenue Church. The church, a rather ponderous pile of Bedford stone, was the most ambitious and most frequented place of worship in Westville, and its bulk was being added to by a lecture-room now rising at its side.

Katherine went up a graveled walk toward a little cottage that stood beneath the shadow of the church. The front of the house was covered with a wide-spreading rose-vine, a tapestry of rich green, which June would gorgeously embroider with sprays of crimson blossoms. The cottage looked what Katherine knew it was, a bower of lovers.

Her ring was answered by a fair, fragile young woman whose eyes were the color of faith and loyalty. A faint tinge crept into the woman's pale cheeks.

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"Why, Katherine! Why—why—I don't know what you think of us, but—but—" Mrs. Sherman could stammer out no more, but stood in the doorway in distressed uncertainty.

"Elsie!"

Katherine's answer was to stretch out her arms.

Instantly the two old friends were in a close embrace.

"I haven't slept, Katherine," sobbed Mrs. Sherman, "for wondering what you would think—"

"I think that, whatever has happened, I love you just the same."

"Thank you for saying it, Katherine!" Mrs. Sherman gazed at her in tearful gratitude. "I can't tell you how we have suffered over this—this affair. Oh, if you only knew!"

It was instinctive with Katherine to soothe the pain of others, though suffering herself.

"I am certain Dr. Sherman acted from the highest motives," she assured the young wife. "So say no more about it."

They had entered the little sitting-room, hung with soft white muslin curtains.

"But at the same time, Elsie, I cannot believe my father guilty," Katherine went on. "Though I honor your husband, why, even the wisest man may be mistaken; and my hope of proving my father's innocence is based on the belief that Dr. Sherman may somehow have made a mistake. At any rate, I'd like to talk over his evidence with him."

"He's trying to work on his sermon, though he's too much worn out to do anything. I'll bring him in."

She passed through a door into the study, and a moment later came back with Dr. Sherman.

The meeting would have been painful to an ordinary person—doubly so was it to such a sensitive nature as his. The young clergyman stood hesitant just within the doorway, his usual pallor greatly intensified, his thin fingers intertwined, in doubt how to greet Katherine till she stretched out her hand to him.

"I want you to understand, Katherine dear," little Mrs. Sherman put in quickly, with a look of adoration at her husband, "that it was after days of agony that Edgar decided to do what he did. You know, Katherine, Dr. West was always as kind to me as another father, and I loved him

almost like one. At first I begged Edgar not to do anything; it's a woman's instinct to spare those she loves. Edgar walked the floor for nights, suffering—oh, how you suffered, Edgar!"

"Isn't it a little incongruous," said Dr. Sherman, smiling wanly at her, "for the instrument that struck the blow to complain, in the presence of the victim, of his suffering?"

"But I want her to know it!" persisted the wife. "She must know it to do you justice, dear! It seemed disloyal, at first, but finally Edgar decided that his duty to the city—"

"Please say no more, Elsie!" Katherine turned to the pale, distressed young minister. "Dr. Sherman, I have not come to utter one single word of recrimination. I have merely come to ask you to tell me all you know about the case."

"I shall be glad to do so."

"And could I also talk with Mr. Marcy, the agent?"

"He has left the city, and will not return until the trial."

Katherine was disappointed by this news. Dr. Sherman, though obviously pained by the task, rehearsed in minutest detail the charges which he had made against Dr. West, and which he would have to repeat upon the witness-stand. Katherine scrutinized every point in his story, and Mr. Marcy's story, which he repeated to her, for the loose end, the loophole, the flaw, that she had thought to find. But flaw there was none; the stories were perfectly consistent and straightforward.

Katherine walked slowly away, still going over and over Dr. Sherman's statement. Dr. Sherman was telling the indubitable truth—yet her father was indubitably innocent. It was a puzzling affair, this her first case.

When she reached home, her aunt told her that a young man was waiting to see her. She entered the big, old-fashioned parlor, fresh and tasteful despite the stiff black walnut which, in the days of her mother's marriage, was spread throughout the land by gentlemen who dealt jointly in furniture and coffins. From a chair there rose a youthful and somewhat corpulent presence, with a chubby and very serious pink face that reposed in a high collar as in a cup.

The youth smiled with a blushing but ingratiating dignity.

"Don't you remember me? I'm Charlie Horn."

"Oh!" Instinctively, as if to identify him by Charlie Horn's well-remembered strawberry-marks, Katherine glanced at his hands. But they were clean, and the warts were gone. She looked at him uncertainly. "You can't be Nellie Horn's little brother?"

"I'm not so little," he said with some resentment. "Since you knew me," he added a little grandiloquently, "I've graduated from Bloomington."

"Please pardon me! It was kind of you to call, and so soon."

"Well, you see I came here on business. I suppose you have seen this afternoon's *Express*?"

"I have not."

He drew out a copy of the *Express*, opened it, and pointed a forefinger to the beginning of an article on the first page.

"You see it says you are going to be your father's lawyer."

Katherine read the indicated paragraphs. Her color heightened. The statement was blunt and bare, but between the lines she read the same contemptuous disapproval of the "new woman" that Bruce had shown before her a few hours earlier. Again her anger against the editor flared up.

"I'm a reporter for the *Clarion*," young Charlie Horn announced, striving not to appear too proud, when she had returned the paper to him. "And I've come to interview you."

"Interview me?" she cried in dismay. "What about?"

"Well, you see, you're the first woman lawyer that's ever been in Westville. It's almost a bigger sensation than your father's—you see, it's a big story." He drew out a bunch of copy paper. "I want you to tell me how you are going to handle the case. And what you think a woman lawyer's prospects are in Westville. And what you think will be woman's status in future society. And you might tell me," concluded young Charlie Horn, "who your favorite author is, and what you think of golf. That last will interest our readers, for our country club is very popular."

It had been the experience of Nellie Horn's brother that the good people of Westville were quite willing—nay, even had a subdued eagerness—to talk about themselves and their opinions, and whom they had visited over Sunday, and who was

"Sundaying" with them. That confident youth was somewhat dazed when, a moment later, he found himself out on the West doorstep with a dim sense of having been politely and decisively dismissed.

But behind him he left a person far more dazed than himself. His call had brought home to Katherine a question which, in the press of affairs, she had as yet hardly considered. How was Westville going to regard the advent of a woman lawyer?

She realized, with a chill of apprehension, how profoundly this question concerned the next few months of her life. Dear, bustling, respectable Westville, she well knew, clung to its own idea of woman's sphere as to a thing divinely ordered. She remembered, when she had announced her intention of studying law, what a raising of hands there had been, what a loud regretting that she had not a mother. Since she had not settled in Westville, and since she had not been actively practising in New York, the town had become partially reconciled. But this present step of hers was new, without a precedent. How would Westville take it?

Her brain burned with this and other matters till the dawn was creeping into her room; but when she met her father at the breakfast-table her face was fresh and smiling.

"Well, how is my client this morning?" she asked gaily. "Do you realize, daddy, that you are my first really truly client?"

"And I suppose you'll charge me something outrageous as a fee!"

"Something like this"—kissing him on the ear. "But how do you feel?"

"Certain that my lawyer will win my case." He smiled. "And how are you?"

"Brimful of ideas."

"Yes? About the—"

"Yes. And about you. First, answer a few of your counsel's questions. Have you been doing much on your scientific work of late?"

"The last two months, since the water-works have been practically completed, I have spent almost my whole time in my laboratory."

"And what you were doing was interesting?"

"Very. You see, I think I am on the verge of discovering that the typhoid bacillus sometimes—"

"You'll tell me all about that later. Now, the first order of your attorney is, just

as soon as you have finished your coffee and folded your napkin, back you go to your laboratory."

"But, Katherine, with this affair—"

"This affair, worry and all, has been shifted off upon your eminent counsel. Work will keep you from worry, so back you go to your darling germs."

"You're mighty good, dear, but—"

"No argument! You've got to do just as your lawyer tells you. And now," she added, "as I may have to be seeing a lot of people, and as having people about the house may interrupt your work, I'm going to take an office."

He stared at her.

"Take an office?"

"Yes. Who knows?—I may pick up a few cases. If I do, I know who can use the money."

"But open an office in Westville! Why, the people—won't it be a little more unpleasant—" He paused doubtfully. "Did you see what the *Express* had to say about you?"

She flushed, but smiled sweetly.

"What the *Express* said is one reason why I'm going to open an office."

"Yes?"

"I'm not going to let fear of that Mr. Bruce dictate my life. And since I'm going to be a lawyer, I'm going to be the whole thing. And what's more, I'm going to act as if I were doing the most ordinary thing in the world. And if Mr. Bruce and the town want to talk, why, we'll just let 'em!"

"But—but—aren't you afraid?"

"Of course I am," she answered promptly. "But when I realize that I'm afraid to do a thing, I'm certain that that is just exactly the thing for me to do. Oh, don't look so worried, dear"—she leaned across and kissed him—"for I'm going to be the perfectest, properest, politest lady that ever scuttled a convention. And nothing is going to happen to me—nothing at all!"

Breakfast finished, Katherine despotically led her father up to his laboratory. A little later she set out for down-town, looking very fresh in a blue summer dress that had the rare qualities of simplicity and grace. Her color was perhaps a little warmer than usual, but she walked along beneath the maples with tranquil mien, seemingly unconscious of some whom she passed, giving others a clear, direct glance, smiling and speaking to friends and acquaintances in her easiest manner.

As she turned into Main Street, the intelligence that she was coming seemed in some mysterious manner to speed before her. Those exemplars of male fashion, the dry-goods clerks, craned furtively about front doors. Bare-armed and aproned proprietors of grocery-stores and their hirelings appeared beneath the awnings, and displayed an unprecedented concern in trying to resuscitate, with aid of sprinkling-cans, bunches of expiring radishes and onions. Owners of amiable steeds that dozed beside the curb hurried out of cavernous doors, the fear of a runaway writ large upon their countenances, to see if a buckle was not loose or a tug perchance unfastened.

Behind her, as she passed, Main Street stood statued in mid-action, strap in motionless hand, sprinkling-can tilting its entire contents of restorative over a box of clothes-pins, and gaped and stared at her. This was epochal for Westville. Never before had a real, live practising woman lawyer trod the cement walks of Main Street.

When Katherine came to Court-House Square, she crossed to the south side, passed the Express Building, and made for the Hollingsworth Block, whose first floor was occupied by the New York Store's "glittering array of rich and profuse fashion." Above this alluring pageant were two floors of offices; and up the narrow stairway leading thereunto Katherine mounted. She entered a door marked: "Hosea Hollingsworth—attorney at law—mortgages, loans, farms." In the room were a table, three chairs, a case of law-books, a desk, on the top of the desk a "plug" hat, so venerable that it looked a very great-grandsire of hats, and two cuspidors marked with evidence that they were not present for ornament alone.

From the desk there rose a man of perhaps seventy, lean, tall, smooth-shaven, slightly stooped, dressed in a rusty and wrinkled frock coat, and with a countenance that might have been cribbed from the mask of Voltaire. In one corner of his thin mouth, half chewed away, was an unlighted cigar.

"I believe this is Mr. Hollingsworth?" said Katherine.

The question was purely formal, for his lank figure was one of her earliest memories.

"Yes. Come right in," he returned in a high, nasal voice.

She drew a chair away from the cuspidors and sat down, while he resumed his

place at his desk. He peered at her through his spectacles, and a dry, almost imperceptible smile played among the fine wrinkles of his leathery face.

"I believe this is Miss Katherine West—our lady lawyer," he remarked. "I read in the *Express* how you—"

Bruce was on her nerves; she could not restrain a sudden flare of temper.

"The editor of that paper is a cad!"

"Well, he ain't exactly a hand-raised gentleman," the old lawyer admitted. "At least, I never heard of his exerting himself to be polite so hard that he strained any tendons."

"You know him, then?"

"A little. He's my nephew."

"Oh! I remember."

"And we live together," the old man loquaciously drawled on, eying her closely, with a smile that might have been either good-natured or satirical. "Batch it—with a nigger who saves us work by stealing things we'd otherwise have to take care of. We scrap most of the time; I make fun of him, and he gets sore. The trouble with him is, he had a dotting ma. He should have had an almighty lot of thrashing as a boy, and instead he never tasted birch-limb once. He's suffering from the spared rod."

Katherine had a shrinking from this old man—an aversion which, in her mature years, she had had no occasion to examine, but which she had inherited unanalyzed from her childhood, when Old Hosie had been the scandal of the town—an infidel, who had dared challenge the creation of the world in seven days, and yet was not stricken down by a fiery bolt from heaven.

She did not pursue the subject of Bruce, but went directly to her business.

"I understand that you have an office to rent."

"So I have. Like to see it?"

"That is what I called for."

"Just come along with me."

He rose, and Katherine followed him to the floor above, and into a room furnished much as the one that she had just left.

"This office was last used," commented Old Hosie, "by a young fellow who taught school down in Buck Creek Township, and got money to study law with. He tried law for a while." The old man shifted his cigar to the other side of his mouth. "He's down in Buck Creek Township teaching school to get money to pay his back office-rent."

"How about the furniture?" asked Katherine.

"That was his. He left it in part payment. You can use it if you want to."

"But I don't want those things about!" She pointed gingerly to a pair of cuspidors.

"All right; though I don't see how you expect to run a law-office in Westville without 'em." He bent over and took them in his hands. "I'll take 'em along. I need a few more, for my business is picking up."

"I suppose I can have possession at once?"

"Whenever you please."

Standing with the cuspidors in his two hands, the old lawyer looked her over. He slowly grinned, and a dry cackle came out of his lean throat.

"I was born out there in Buck Creek Township myself," he said. "My folks were all Quakers, same as your ma's and your Aunt Rachel's. I was brought up on plowing, husking corn, and going to meeting. Never smiled till I was twenty; wore a halo, size too large, that slipped down and made my ears stick out. My grandfather's name was Elijah, my father's Elisha. My father had twelve sons, and beginning with me, Hosea, he named 'em after the minor prophets. Being brought up in a houseful of prophets, naturally a lot of the gift of prophecy sort of got rubbed off on me."

"Well?" said Katherine, not quite able to repress her impatience.

Again he shifted his cigar.

"Well, when I prophesy, it's inspired," he went on. "And you can take it as the word that came unto Hosea that a woman lawyer settling in Westville is going to raise the very dickens in this old town!"

VI

WHEN Old Hosie had gone, Katherine sat down at the desk and gazed thoughtfully out of her window, taking in the tarnished dome of the court-house and the heavy-boned farm horses that stood about the iron hitch-racks of the square, stamping and switching their tails in dozing warfare against the flies. She began to go over the case once more; and, having decided to test all possible theories, for the moment she pigeonholed the idea of a mistake, and began to seek for other explanations.

Presently her eyes, vacantly watching the workmen busily removing the speakers' stand, began to glow, and she sprang up and excitedly paced the little office. Per-

haps her father had unwittingly and innocently become involved in some large system of corruption! Perhaps this case was the first symptom of the existence of some deep-hidden municipal disease!

It seemed possible—very possible. Her two years with the Municipal League had taught her that such practises were not unknown. The idea filled her; she began to burn with a feverish hope. But from the first she was sufficiently cool-headed to realize that to follow up the idea she required an intimate knowledge of Westville political affairs.

Here she felt herself greatly handicapped. Owing to her long absence from Westville she was in practical ignorance of local conditions. She had no one to whom she could turn for information. Her father, she knew, could be of little service; expert though he was in his specialty, he was blind to evil in men. As for Mr. Blake, she did not care to ask aid from him so soon after his refusal of assistance; and as for others, she felt that all who could give her information were either hostile to her father or critical of herself.

For days the idea possessed her mind. She kept it to herself, and, her suspicious eyes sweeping in all directions, studied as best she could to find some evidence, some clue, that would give face to her conjecture. In her excited hope, she strove, as she thought and worked, to be indifferent to what the town might think about her. But she was well aware that Old Hosie's prophecy was swift in coming true—that a storm was raging, a storm of her own sex.

To be sure, there was no open insult, no direct attack, no face-to-face denunciation; but piazas buzzed indignantly with her name. At the meeting of the Ladies' Aid, the poor were neglected; at the Missionary Society, they forgot the unbibled heathen upon the foreign shore. Fragments of her sisters' pronouncements were wafted to Katherine's ears.

"No self-respecting, womanly woman would ever think of wanting to be a lawyer"—"A forward, brazen, unwomanly young person"—"A disgrace to the town, a disgrace to our sex"—"Think of the example she sets to impressionable young girls; they'll want to break away and do all sorts of unwomanly things"—"Her reason for being a lawyer is only that it gives her a greater chance to associate with the men."

Katherine heard, her mouth hardened, a certain defiance came into her manner—but she went on seeking evidence to support her suspicion. Every day made her feel more keenly her need of intimate knowledge about the city's political affairs; then, unexpectedly, and from an unexpected quarter, an informant stepped upon her stage.

Several times Old Hosie Hollingsworth had spoken casually when they had chanced to pass in the building or on the street. One day his lean, stooped figure appeared in her office, and he helped himself to a chair.

"I see you haven't exactly made what my friend Charlie Horn, in his dramatic criticisms, calls an uproarious and unprecedented success," he remarked, after a few preliminaries.

"I have not been sufficiently interested to notice," was her crisp response.

"That's right; keep your back up," said he. "I've been agin about everything that's popular, and for everything that's unpopular, that ever happened in this town. I've been an 'agin-er' for fifty years. They'd have tarred and feathered me long ago if there'd been any leading citizen unstingy enough to have donated the tar. Then, too, I've had a little money, and going through the needle's eye is easy business compared to losing the respect of Westville so long as you've got money—unless, of course," he added, "you're a female lawyer. I tell you, there's no better fun than stirring up the animals in this old town. Any one unpopular in Westville is worth being friends with; and so, if you're willing—"

He held out his thin, bony hand, which Katherine, with no very marked enthusiasm, took. Then her eyes gleamed with a new light, and, obeying an impulse, she asked:

"Are you acquainted with political conditions in Westville?"

"Me acquainted with—" He cackled. "Why, I've been sitting at my office window looking down on the political circus of this town for forty years!"

She leaned forward eagerly.

"Then you know how things now stand?"

"I guess I do!"

"Tell me, is there any rotten politics, any graft or corruption, going on?" She flushed. "Of course, I mean except what's charged against my father."

"When Blind Charlie Peck was in power, there was more graft and dirty—"

"Not then, but now?" she interrupted.

"Now? Well, of course you know that since Blake run Blind Charlie out of business ten years ago, Blake has been the big gun in this town."

"Yes, I know."

"Then you must know that in the last ten years Westville has been text, illustration, and sermon for all the reformers in the State."

"But could not corruption be going on without Mr. Blake knowing it? Could not Mr. Peck be secretly carrying out some scheme?"

"Blind Charlie? Blind Charlie ain't dead yet, not by a long sight—and as long as there's a breath in his carcass, that good-natured old blackguard is likely to be a dangerous customer. But though Charlie's still the boss of his party, he controls no offices, and has no real power to speak of. He's just about as helpless as Satan was after he'd been kicked out of heaven, and before he'd landed that big job he holds down below. Nowadays Charlie Peck just sits in his side office over at the Tippecanoe House, playing seven-up, from breakfast till bedtime."

"Then you think there's no corrupt politics in Westville?" she asked in a sinking voice.

"Not an ounce of 'em!" said Old Hosie with decision.

This agreed with the conviction that had been growing upon Katherine during the last few days. After this talk with the old lawyer, she was forced back again upon her theory of a misunderstanding. She went carefully over the records of her father's department, on file in the court-house, seeking some item that would cast light upon the puzzle. She went over and over the indictment, seeking some loose end, some overlooked inconsistency, that would yield her at least a clue.

For days she kept at this work, steeling herself against the disapprobation of the town; but she found nothing. Then, in a flash, a forgotten point recurred to her. The trouble, so went her theory, was all due to a confusion between a bribe and a donation to the hospital. Where was that donation?

Here was a matter that might at last lead to a solution of the difficulty. Again on fire with hope, she interviewed her father. He was certain that a donation had been promised; he had thought the envelope handed him by Mr. Marcy contained the

gift; but of the donation itself she could learn nothing.

She interviewed Dr. Sherman; he had heard Mr. Marcy refer to a donation, but knew nothing about the matter. She tried to get in communication with Mr. Marcy, only to learn that he was in England, studying some new filtering-plants recently installed in that country.

Undiscouraged, she one day stepped off the train in St. Louis, the home of the Acme Filter Company, and appeared in the office of the general manager. That gentleman, who ran to portliness in his figure, his jewelry, and his courtesy, seemed perfectly acquainted with the case. In exculpation of himself and his company, he said that they were constantly being held up by every sort of official, from county commissioners to mayors, and they were simply forced to give "presents" in order to do business.

"But my father's defense," put in Katherine, "was that he thought this 'present' was in reality a donation to the hospital. Was anything said to my father about a donation?"

"I believe there was."

"That corroborates my father!" Katherine exclaimed eagerly. "Would you make that statement at the trial—or at least give me an affidavit to that effect?"

"I'll be glad to give you an affidavit. But I should have to explain that the 'present' and the donation were two distinctly separate affairs."

"Then what became of the donation?" Katherine cried triumphantly.

"It was sent," said the manager.

"Sent?"

"I sent it myself—a check for fifty dollars," was the reply.

Katherine left St. Louis more puzzled than before. What had become of the check, if it had really been sent? Home again, she ransacked her father's desk, with his aid, and in one drawer they found a bunch of long-neglected mail.

Dr. West at first scratched his head in perplexity.

"I remember now," he said. "I never was much of a hand to keep up with my letters, and for the few days before that celebration I was so excited that I just threw everything—"

But Katherine had torn open an envelope, and was holding in her hands a fifty-dollar check from the Acme Filter Company.

"What was the date of your arrest?" she asked sharply; "the day when Mr. Marcy gave you that money?"

"The 15th of May."

"This check is dated the 12th of May. The envelope shows it was received in Westville on the 13th."

"Well, what of that?"

"Only this," said Katherine slowly, and with a chill at her heart, "that the prosecution can charge, and we cannot disprove the charge, that the actual donation was already in your possession at the time when you accepted what you say you believed was the donation. We can reply that it had been overlooked, and that the envelope was not opened until long after, but we shall not be believed."

This was a heavy blow, but Katherine went doggedly back to the first beginnings. As the weeks crept slowly by, she continued without remission her desperate search for evidence which would make clear to every one that the whole affair was merely a mistake. But the only development of the summer which at all bore upon the case—and even that bearing seemed to Katherine indirect—was that, since early June, the service of the water-works had steadily been deteriorating.

There was frequently a shortage in the supply, and the filtering-plant, the direct cause of Dr. West's disgrace, had proved so complete a failure that its use had been discontinued. The water was often murky and unpleasant to the taste. Moreover, all kinds of other faults began to develop in the plant. The city complained loudly of the quality of the water and the failure of the system. It was like one of these new-fangled toys, averred the street-corners, that runs like a miracle while the paint is on it, and then, with a whiz and a whirl, goes all to pieces.

But to this mere by-product of the case Katherine gave little heed. She had to keep desperately upon the case itself. At times, feeling herself so utterly alone, making no inch of headway, her spirits sank very low indeed. What made the affair so wearing was the fact that she was groping in the dark; she was fighting an invisible enemy, even though it was no more than a misunderstanding—an enemy whom, strive as she would, she could not clutch, with whom she could not grapple. Again and again she prayed for a foe in the open. Had there been a fight, no matter how bit-

ter, her part would have been far, far easier—for in fight there are action and excitement and the lifting hope of victory.

It took courage to work as she did, weary week upon weary week, and discover nothing; it took courage not to slink away at the town's disapprobation. At times, in the bitterness of her heart, she wished that she were out of it all, that she could just rest, and be friends with every one.

In such moods it would creep coldly in upon her that there could be but one solution of the mystery—that, after all, her father must be guilty. But when she went home and looked into his thoughtful, unworldly old face, that solution would instantly become impossible; and she would cast out doubt and despair and renew her determination.

The weeks dragged heavily by. After the beginning of July it was hot and dusty, and so dry that out in the country the caked earth was a fine network of zigzag fissures. The farmers, gazing despondently upon their shriveling corn, watched with vain hope for a rescuing cloud to darken the clear, hard, brilliant heavens.

At length the summer burned to its close; the opening of the September term of court was at hand; but still the case stood just as on the day when Katherine had stepped so joyously from the limited. The evidence of Sherman was unshaken; the charges of Bruce had no answer.

One afternoon—her father's case was set for two days later—as Katherine left her office, desperate, not knowing which way to turn, her nerves worn thin by the long strain, she saw her father's name on the front page of the *Express*. She bought a copy. In the center of the first page, in a "box" and set in heavy-faced type, was an editorial in Bruce's most rousing style, trying her father in advance, declaring him flagrantly guilty, and demanding for him the law's extremest penalty.

That editorial unloosed her long-collected wrath—wrath that had many a reason. In Bruce, Katherine had from the first seen the chief inspiration of the general bitterness against her father. All summer long he had continued his sharp attacks upon Dr. West; and their virulence had kept the town wrought up against the old physician. Moreover, Katherine regarded Bruce as a powerful, ruthless, demagogic hypocrite. And to her hostility in her father's behalf, and her contempt for his radical quackery,

was added the bitter implacability of the woman who feels herself scorned. The town's attitude toward her she resented; but Bruce she hated, and prayed with all her soul that she might humble him.

She crushed the *Express*, flung it from her into the gutter, and walked home all a-tremble. Her aunt met her in the hall as she was taking off her hat. The old woman was visibly excited; a spot burned faintly in either withered cheek.

"Who does thee think is here?" she asked.

"Who?" Katherine repeated mechanically, her wrath too high for interest in anything else.

"Mr. Bruce—up-stairs with thy father."

"What?" cried Katherine.

Her hat missed the hook and fell to the floor, and she went springing up the stairway. The next instant she flung open her father's door, and walked straight up to Bruce, before whom she paused, her breast heaving, her eyes on fire.

"What are you doing here?" she demanded.

His powerful figure rose, and his square-hewn face looked directly into her own.

"Interviewing your father," he returned, with his aggressive calm.

"He was asking me to confess," explained Dr. West.

"Confess!" cried Katherine.

"Just so," replied Bruce. "His guilt is undoubted, so he might as well confess."

Her scorn flamed at him.

"I see! You are trying to get a confession out of him, in advance of the trial, as a big feature for your disgusting paper!" She moved a pace nearer to him, and all the suppressed anger, all the hidden anguish, of the last three months seethed up and burst their bonds. "Oh! Oh!" she cried breathlessly. "I never dreamed, till I met you, that a man could be so low, so heartless, as to hound an old man as you have hounded my father—and all for the sake of a yellow newspaper sensation! But he's a safe man for you to attack! Yes, he's safe—old, unpopular, helpless!"

Bruce's heavy brows lowered; he did not give back a step before her ireful figure.

"And because he's old and unpopular, I should not attack him, eh?" he demanded. "Because he's down, I should not hit him? That's your woman's reasoning, is it? Well, let me tell you"—his gray eyes flashed, and his voice had a crunching tone

—"that I believe when you've got an enemy of society down, don't, because you pity him, let him get up to do the same thing over again. While you've got him down, keep on hitting him till you've finished him!"

"Like the brute that you are!" she cried. "But, like the coward you are, you first very carefully choose your enemy of society! You were careful to choose one who could not hit back!"

"I did not choose your father. He thrust himself upon the town's attention. I consider neither his weakness nor his strength. I consider only the fact that your father has done the city a greater injury than any man who ever lived in Westville!"

"It's a lie! I tell you it's a lie!"

"It's the truth!" he declared harshly. "His swindling Westville by giving us a worthless filtering-plant in return for a bribe—why, that is the smallest evil he has done the town. Before that time, Westville was on the verge of making great municipal advances—of becoming a model and a leader for the small cities of the Middle West. And now all that grand development is ruined—and ruined by that man, your father!" He excitedly jerked a newspaper from his pocket, and held it out to her. "If you want to see to what he has brought us, read that editorial in the *Clarion*!"

She fixed him with glittering eyes.

"I have read one cowardly editorial to-day in a Westville paper. That is enough."

"Read that, I say!" he commanded.

For answer she took the *Clarion*, twisted it, and tossed it into the waste-basket. She glared at Bruce, quivering all over, in her hands a convulsive itch for physical vengeance.

"If I thought that in all that fine talk about the city there was one single word of sincerity, I might respect you," she said with slow and scathing contempt. "But your words are the words of a mere poser—of a man who twists the truth to fit his desires—of a man who wears the ideas that seem to him most profitable—of a man who cares not how poor, how innocent, is the body he uses as a stepping-stone for his clambering greed and ambition. Oh, I know you—I have watched you—I have read you. You are a mere self-seeker! You are a demagogue! You are a liar! And on top of that, you are a coward!"

Whatever Arnold Bruce was, he was a man with a temper, and fury was blazing behind his heavy spectacles.

"Go on! I care *that* for the words of a woman who has so little taste, so little sense, so little modesty, as to leave the sphere—"

"You boor!" gasped Katherine.

"Perhaps I am. At least I am not afraid to speak the truth straight out even to a woman. You are all wrong. Your pretensions as a lawyer are utterly absurd, as the trial on Thursday will show you. The condemnation of the town is not half as severe a rebuke—"

"Stop!" gasped Katherine. A wild defiance surged up and overmastered her; her nerves broke, and her hot words tumbled out hysterically. "Just wait—I'll show you what your judgment of me is worth! I am going to clear my father! I am going to make this Westville, that condemns me, kneel at my feet! And as for you—you can think what you please! But don't you ever dare speak to my father again—don't dare speak to me again—don't dare enter this house again! Now, go! Go, I say!"

Bruce's face had grown purple; he seemed to be choking. For a space he gazed at her; then, without answering, he bowed slightly and was gone.

She glared for a moment at the door; then, suddenly, she collapsed upon the floor, her head and arms on the old hair-cloth sofa, and her whole body shaken with silent sobs. Dr. West, first gazing at her a little helplessly, sat down upon the sofa, and softly stroked her hair. For a time there were no words—only her convulsive breathing, her choking sobs.

Presently he said gently:

"I'm sure you'll do everything you said."

"No—that's the trouble," she moaned. "What I said—was—was just a bluff! I can't do any of those things. Your trial is two days off—and, father, I haven't one bit of evidence! I don't know what we're going to do, and the jury will have to—oh, father, father, father, that man was right; I'm just—just a great big failure!"

Again she shook with sobs. The old man continued to sit beside her, softly stroking her thick brown hair.

VII

PRESENTLY Katherine's sobs subsided, as if shut off by main force, and she rose to her feet. She wiped her eyes and looked at her father, a wan smile on her reddened, still tremulous face.

"What a hope-inspiring lawyer you have, father!"

"I would not want a truer," said he loyally.

"We won't have one of these cloud-bursts again, I promise you. But when you have been under a strain for months, and things are stretched tighter and tighter, and at last something makes them snap, why, you just can't help— Well," she ended, "a man would have done something else, I suppose, but it might have been just as bad!"

"Worse!" avowed her father.

"Anyhow, it's all over. I'll repair some of the worst ravages of the storm, and then we'll talk about our program for the trial."

As she was arranging her hair before her father's mirror, she saw, in the glass, the old man stoop and take something from the waste-basket. Turning his back to her, he cautiously examined the object.

She left the mirror and came up behind him.

"What are you looking at, dear?"

He started, and glanced up.

"Oh—eh—that editorial Mr. Bruce referred to."

"Well?"

He rubbed his head dazedly.

"If that should happen, with me even indirectly the cause of it—why, Katherine, it really would be pretty bad!" He held out the *Clarion*. "Perhaps, after all, you had better read it."

She took the paper. The *Clarion* had from the first opposed municipal ownership of the water-works, and the editorial declared that the present situation gave the newspaper, and all those who had held a similar opinion, their long-awaited triumph and vindication. It went on to declare:

This failure is only what invariably happens when a city tries municipal ownership. The situation has grown so unbearably acute that Westville's only hope of good water lies in the sale of the system to some private concern, which will give us that superior service which is always afforded by private capital. The city is upon the eve of an election, and we most emphatically urge upon both parties that they should make the chief plank of their platforms the immediate sale of our utterly discredited water-works to some private company.

The editorial did not stir Katherine as it had appeared to stir Bruce, nor even as it had stirred Dr. West. She was interested in the water-works only in so far as they concerned her father, and the *Clarion's* proposal had no apparent bearing on his guilt or innocence.

She laid the newspaper on the table, without comment, and proceeded to discuss the coming trial. The only course she had to suggest was that they should plead for a postponement on the ground that they needed more time in which to prepare their defense. If the plea were denied, then before them lay certain failure—conviction—imprisonment. On that plea, then, they decided to place all their hope.

When the matter had been talked out, Dr. West took the *Clarion* from the table, and again read the editorial with troubled face, while Katherine walked to and fro across the floor, her mind all on the trial.

"If the town does sell, it will be too bad!" he sighed.

"I suppose so," said Katherine mechanically.

"It has reached me that people are saying that the system isn't worth anything like what we paid for it."

"Is that true?" she asked absently.

Dr. West drew himself up and his faded cheeks flushed indignantly.

"No, it's not true. I don't know what's wrong, but it's the very best system of its size in the Middle West!"

She paused.

"Forgive me—I wasn't paying any attention to what I was saying. I'm sure it is."

She resumed her pacing.

"But if they sell out to some company,"

Dr. West continued, "the company will get it for one-third, or less, of what it is worth."

"So if some corporation had been wishing to buy it," commented Katherine, "things could not have worked out better for the company if they had been planned." She came to a sudden pause, and stood gazing at her father, her lips slowly parting. "It could not have worked out better for the company if it had been planned," she repeated.

"No," said Dr. West.

She picked up the *Clarion*, quickly read the editorial, and laid the paper aside.

"Father!" Katherine's voice was a low, startled cry.

"Yes?"

She moved slowly toward him, in her face a breathless look, and she caught his shoulders with tense hands.

"*Perhaps it was planned?*"

"What?"

Her voice rang out more loudly.

"*Perhaps it was planned!*"

"But, Katherine—what do you mean?"

"Let me think. Let me think." She began feverishly to pace the room. "Oh, why did I not think of this before?" she cried to herself. "I thought of graft—political corruption—everything else; but it never occurred to me that there might be a plan, a subtle, deep-laid plan, to steal the water-works!"

Dr. West watched her wonderingly as she went up and down the floor, her brows knit, her lips moving in self-communion. Her connection with the Municipal League in New York had given her some knowledge of the devious means by which public service corporations have sometimes gained their ends. Her mind flashed over the possibilities of the situation. After a few minutes she paused suddenly before her father, her face flushed, triumph in her eyes.

"Father, *it was planned!*"

"Eh?" said he.

"Father," she demanded excitedly, "do you know what some of the great public service corporations are planning to do?" Her words rushed on, not waiting for an answer. "They have got hold of almost all the rich public utilities in the great cities, and now they are turning to a fresh field—the small cities. Westville is a rich chance in a small way. It has only thirty thousand inhabitants now; but it is growing; some day it will have fifty thousand—a hundred thousand."

"That's what people say."

"If a private company could get hold of the water-works, the system would not only be profitable at once, but it would be worth a fortune as the city grew. Now, if a corporation wanted to buy in the water-works, what would be its first move?"

"To make an offer for them, I suppose."

"Never! Its first step would be to try to make the people want to sell. And how would it try to make the people want to sell?"

"Why—why—"

"By making the water-works fail!" Her excitement was mounting. "Fail so badly that the people would be disgusted, just as they now are, and willing to sell at any price. And now, father—and now, father"—he could feel her quivering all over—"listen to me! We're coming to the point! How would they make the water-works fail?"

He could only blink at her.

"For one thing, they would discredit and remove from office the incorruptible man whose care and knowledge had made them a success! Don't you see, father? Don't you see?"

"Bless me," said the old man, "if I know what you're talking about!"

"With you out of the way, whom they knew they could not corrupt, they could buy under-officials to attend to the details of making the water bad and the plant itself a failure—just exactly what has been done. You are not the real victim! You are just an obstruction—something that they had to get out of the way. The real victim is Westville! It's a plan to rob the city!"

His gray eyes began to catch the light that blazed from hers.

"I begin to see," he said. "It hardly seems possible, though, that people would do such things. Perhaps you're right. What are you going to do?"

"Fight!"

"Fight?" He looked admiringly at her glowing figure. "But if there is a strong company behind all this, for you to fight it alone—it will be an awfully big fight!"

"I don't care how big the fight is!" she cried exultantly. "What has almost broken my heart, till now, is that there has been no one to fight!"

A shadow fell on the old man's face.

"But, after all, Katherine, it is only a guess."

"Of course it is only a guess!" she replied; "but I have tried every other possible solution. This is the only one left, and it fits every known circumstance of the case. It is only a guess, but I'll stake my life on its being the right guess!" Her voice rose. "Oh, father, we're on the right track at last! We're going to clear you! Don't ever doubt that. We're going to clear you!"

There was no resisting the ringing confidence in her voice, the fire of her enthusiasm.

"Katherine!" he cried, and opened his arms.

She rushed into them and held him close.

"We're going to clear you, father! And, oh, won't it be fine! Won't it be fine!"

"What are you going to do first?" her father asked.

"Try to find the person or corporation behind the scheme."

"And how will you do that?"

"First, I shall talk it over with Mr. Blake. You know he told me to come to him if I ever wished his advice. He knows the situation here—he has the interests of Westville at heart—and I know he will help us. I'm not going to lose a second. I'm off to see him now!"

She rushed down-stairs. But she did have to lose a second, and many of them, for when she called up Mr. Blake's office on the telephone, the answer came back that Mr. Blake was in the capital of the State, and would not return till the following day on the one-forty-five.

It occurred to Katherine to advise with Old Hosie Hollingsworth, for during the long summer her blind, childish shrinking had changed to warm liking of the dry old lawyer. She had discovered, too, that the horrifying heresies which it had been his delight to utter a generation before—and on which he still prided himself—were now part of the belief of many an orthodox divine. But she decided against conferring with Old Hosie; her adviser and leader must be a man more actively in the current of modern affairs. No, Mr. Blake was her great hope, and precious and few as were the hours before the trial, there was nothing for it but to wait for his return.

She went up to her room, and her excited mind, now half inspired, went feverishly over the situation and all who were in any wise concerned in it. When she came to Bruce, her hands clenched the arms of her wicker rocker. In a flash, the whole man was plain to her, and her second great discovery of the day was made.

Bruce was an agent of the hidden corporation!

The motive behind his fierce desire to injure her father was at last apparent—to destroy Dr. West was his part in the conspiracy. As for his rabid advocacy of municipal ownership, and all his fine talk about the city's betterment, that was mere sham—merely the virtuous front behind which he could work out his purpose unsuspected. No one could quote the scripture of civic improvement for his purpose more loudly than the civic despoiler.

She always had distrusted Bruce; now she knew him. Many a time through the night her mind flashed back to him from other matters, and she thrilled with a vengeful joy at the thought of tearing aside his mask.

It was a long and feverish night to Kath-

erine, and a long and feverish morning. At a quarter to two o'clock she was in Mr. Blake's office; and a few minutes later the lawyer came in. He had not been told that she was waiting, and at sight of her sitting beside the window, he came to a sudden pause; but the next instant he had crossed the room and was shaking her hand.

For that first instant Katherine's eyes and mind, which during twenty-four hours had had an almost more than mortal clearness, had an impression that Blake was strangely agitated; but the moment over, the impression was gone. He placed a chair for her at the corner of his desk, and himself sat down, his dark, strong, handsome face fixed on hers.

"Now, how can I serve you, Katherine?"

There were rings about her eyes, but excitement gave her color.

"You know that to-morrow is father's trial?"

"Yes. You must have a hard, hard fight before you."

"Perhaps not so hard as you may think." She tried hard to keep her tugging excitement in leash.

"I hope not," said he.

"I think it may prove easy, if you will help me."

"Help you?"

"Yes. I have come to ask you that again."

"Well—you see—as I told you—"

"But the situation has changed since I first came to you," she put in quickly, not quite able to restrain a little laugh. "I have found out something!"

He started.

"You have found out, you say—"

"I have found out something!" She smiled at him happily, triumphantly.

"And that?" said he.

She leaned forward.

"I do not need to tell you, for you know it, that the big corporations have discovered a new gold-mine—or rather, thousands of little gold-mines; that all over the country they have gained control, and are working to gain control, of the street-car lines, gas-works, and other public utilities in the smaller cities."

"Well?"

She spoke excitedly, putting the case more definitely than it really was, to better the chance of winning his aid.

"Well, I have just discovered that there is a plan on foot, directed by a hidden some

one, to seize the water-works of Westville. I have discovered that my father is not guilty. He is the victim of a trick to ruin the water-works and make the people willing to sell. The first thing to do is to find the man behind the scheme. I want you to help me find him."

A greenish pallor had overspread Blake's features.

"And you want me—to find the man?" he said.

"Yes. I know you will take this up, simply because of your interest in the city. But there is another reason—it would help you in your larger ambition. If you could disclose the scheme, save the city, become the hero of a great popular gratitude, think how it would help your Senatorial chances!"

He did not at once reply, but sat staring at her.

"Don't you see?" she cried.

"I—I see."

"Why, it would turn your chance for the Senate into a certainty! It would—but, Mr. Blake, what's the matter?"

"Matter?" he repeated huskily. "Why—why, nothing."

She gazed at him with deep concern.

"But you look almost sick!"

In his eyes there struggled a wild look. Her gaze became fixed upon his face, so strangely changed. In her present high-wrought state, all her senses were excited to their most intense keenness.

There was a moment of silence, her eyes gazing into his. Then she stood slowly up, and one hand reached slowly out and clutched his arm.

"Mr. Blake!" she whispered in an awed and terrified tone. She continued to stare into his eyes. "Mr. Blake!" she repeated.

She felt a tensing of his body, as of a man who seeks to master himself with a mighty effort. He tried to smile, though his greenish pallor did not leave him.

"It is my turn," he said, "to ask what is the matter with you, Katherine!"

"Mr. Blake!"

She loosed her hold upon his arm, and shrank away. He rose.

"What is the matter?" he repeated.

"You seem upset. I suppose it is the nervous strain of to-morrow's trial."

In her face was stupefied horror.

"It is what—what I have discovered!"

"Your discovery? What you call your discovery would be most valuable, if true;

but it is a dream, Katherine—a crazy, crazy dream.”

She still was looking straight into his eyes.

“Mr. Blake, it is true,” she said slowly, almost breathlessly. “For I have found the man behind the plan!”

“Indeed! And who is he?”

“I think you know him, Mr. Blake.”

“I?”

“Better than any one else.”

His smile had left him.

“Who?”

She continued to stare at him for a moment in silence. Then she slowly raised her arm and pointed at him.

The silence continued for several moments, each gazing at the other. He had put one hand upon his desk, and was leaning heavily upon it. He looked like a man sick unto death. But soon a shiver ran through him; he swallowed, gripped himself in a strong control, and smiled again his strained, unnatural smile.

“Katherine, Katherine,” he tried to say reprovingly and indulgently—but there was a quaver in his voice—“you have gone quite out of your head!”

“It is true!” she cried. “All unintentionally I have followed one of the oldest of police expedients. I have suddenly confronted the unsuspecting criminal with his crime, and I have surprised his guilt upon his face!”

“What you say is absurd! I can explain it only on the theory that you are not yourself.”

“Never before was I so much myself!” In this moment, when Katherine felt that the hidden enemy who she had striven so long to find was at last revealed to her, she experienced more of anguish than of triumph. “Oh, how could you do such a thing, Mr. Blake?” she burst out. “How could you do it?”

He shook his head, and tried to smile at her perversity—but the smile was a wan failure.

“I see—I see!” she cried. “It is just the old story. A good man rises to power as the champion of the people—and, once in power, the opportunities, the temptation, are too much for him. But I never—no, never thought that such a thing would happen with you!”

He strove for the injured air of the misjudged old friend.

“Again I must say that I can only ex-

plain your charges by supposing that you are not in your right mind.”

“Here in Westville you believe it is not a woman’s business to think about politics,” Katherine went on. “But I could not help thinking about them, and watching them. I have lost my faith in the old parties, but I had kept my trust in some of their leaders. I believed some of them honest, devoted, indomitable. And of them all the one whom I admired most, ranked highest, was you. And now—and now—oh, Mr. Blake!—to learn that you—”

“Katherine! Katherine!” He raised his hands with the manner of exasperated, yet indulgent, helplessness.

“Mr. Blake! Mr. Blake! You know you are now only playing a part! And you know that I know it!” She moved up to him eagerly. “Listen to me,” she pleaded rapidly. “You have only started on this—you have not gone too far to turn back. You have done no real wrong as yet, save to my father, and I know that he will forgive you. Drop your plan—let my father be honorably cleared—and everything will be just as before!”

For a space he seemed shaken by her words. She watched him, breathless, awaiting the outcome of the battle which she felt was waging within him.

“Drop the plan—drop it, I beg you!” she cried.

His dark face twitched; a quivering ran through his body. Then by a mighty effort he partially regained his self-mastery.

“There is no plan for me to drop,” he said huskily. “Your charges are so absurd that it would be foolish to deny them. They are merely the ravings of a hysterical woman.”

“And this—is your answer?”

“That is my answer.”

She gazed at him for a long moment. Then she sighed. “I’m so sorry!” she said; and she turned away and moved toward the door.

She gave him a parting look as he stood, pale, quivering, yet controlled, behind his desk. In this last moment she remembered the gallant fight this man had made against Blind Charlie Peck; she remembered that fragrant, far-distant night of June when he had asked her to marry him; and she felt as if she were gazing for the last time upon a dear, dead face.

“I’m sorry—oh, so sorry!” she said tremulously. “Good-by!”

Turning, she walked with bowed head out of his office.

VIII

KATHERINE stumbled down into the hot and dusty glare of Main Street. She was still awed and dumfounded by her discovery; she could not as yet realize its full significance and whither it would lead; but her mind flashed with thoughts that were unfinished and questions that did not await reply. She felt a sickening amazement at this new revelation of Blake's character and development. She marveled how a man once so splendid had come to sell his soul for money or ambition. She speculated on what Westville would think and do—Westville that worshiped him—if it but knew the truth. She wondered how she was to give battle to an antagonist so able in himself, so powerfully supported by the public. She reflected upon the strange caprice of fate that had given her, as the man whom she must fight, her former idol, her former lover.

Shaken with emotion, her mind shot through with these fragmentary thoughts, she turned into a side street. But she had walked beneath its drought-withered trees no more than a block or two when her largest immediate problem, her father's trial on the morrow, thrust itself into her consciousness, and the pressing need of further action drove all this spasmodic speculation from her mind. She began to think upon what she should next do.

Almost instantly she thought of the man whom she had definitely connected with the plot against her father, Arnold Bruce, and she turned back for the square, afire with a new idea. She had made a great advance, as she believed, by suddenly confronting Blake with knowledge of his guilt; might she not make some further advance, gain some new clue, by confronting Bruce in like manner?

Ten minutes after she had left Blake's office Katherine entered the Express Building. From the first floor sounded a deep and continuous thunder—that afternoon's issue was coming from the press. She lifted her skirts and gingerly mounted the stairway, over which an office-boy was occasionally seen to make incantations with the stub of an undisturbing broom.

At the head of the stairway a door stood open. This she entered, and found herself in the general editorial room, ankle-deep

with dirt and paper. In one corner a telegraph-receiver chattered away unheeded. In the center, at a long table, typewriters before them, sat three shirt-sleeved young men reading copies of the *Express*, which had just been brought up from the nether regions, moist with the black spittle of the beast that there roared and rumbled.

At sight of her tall, fresh figure in the doorway, a red spot in her either cheek, defiance in her brown eyes, Billy Harper, quicker than the rest, sprang up and crossed the room.

"Miss West, I believe," he said. "Can I do anything for you?"

"I wish to speak with Mr. Bruce," was her cold reply.

"This way," and Billy led her across the deep carpet of proofs, discarded copy, and old newspapers, to a door beside the stairway that led down into the press-room. "Go right in," he said.

She entered. Bruce, his shirt-sleeves rolled up and his bared forearms grimy, sat glancing through the *Express*, with his feet crossed on his littered desk, a black pipe hanging from one corner of his mouth. He did not look up, but turned another page.

"Well, what's the matter?" he grunted between his teeth.

"I'd like a few words with you," said Katherine.

"Eh!" His head twisted about. "Miss West!"

His feet suddenly dropped to the floor; he stood up and laid the pipe on his desk. For the moment he was uncertain how to receive her, but the bright, hard look in her eyes fixed his attitude.

"Certainly," he said in a brusque, businesslike tone. He placed the atlas-bottomed chair before his own. "Be seated." She sat down, and he took his own chair. "I am at your service," said he.

Her cheeks slowly gathered a higher color, her eyes gleamed with a triumphant fire, and she looked straight into his square and rather massive face. Over Blake she had felt an infinity of regret and pain; for this man she felt only boundless hatred, and she thrilled with a vengeful, exultant joy that she was about to unmask him—that later she might crush him utterly.

"I am at your service," he repeated.

She slowly wet her lips and gathered herself to strike, alert to watch the effects of her blow.

"I have called, Mr. Bruce," she said with slow distinctness, "to let you know that I know there is a conspiracy under way to steal the water-works, and to let you know that I know you are near its center!"

"What?" he cried.

Her devouring gaze did not lose a change of feature, not so much as the shifting in the pupil of his eye.

"Oh, I know your plot!" she went on rapidly. "I know every detail! The first step was to ruin the water-works, so that the city would sell, and sell cheap. The first step toward ruining the system was to get my father out of the way. And so this charge against my father was trumped up to ruin him. The leader of the whole plot is Mr. Blake; his right-hand man yourself. Oh, I know every detail of your infamous scheme!"

He stared at her; his lips had slowly parted.

"What? You say that Mr. Blake—"

"Oh, you're trying to play your part of innocence well, but you cannot deceive me!" she cried with fierce contempt. "Yes, Mr. Blake is the head of it. I just came from his office. There's not a doubt in the world of his guilt—he has admitted it. Oh—"

"Admitted it?"

"Yes, admitted it! Oh, it was a fine and easy way to make a fortune—to trick the city into selling at a fraction of its value a business which, run privately, will pay a large and growing profit!"

He had stood up, and was scratching his bristling hair. Katherine also rose.

"And you!" she cried, glaring at him, her voice rising to a climax of scorn. "You! Don't walk the room"—he had begun to do so—"but look into my eyes. To think how you have attacked my father, maligned him, covered him with dishonor! And for what? To help you carry through a dirty

trick to rob the city! Oh, I wish I had the words to tell you—"

But he had begun again to pace the little room, scratching his head, his eyes gleaming behind the heavy glasses.

"Listen to me!" she commanded.

"Oh, let me have it—all you want to!" he cried out. "Only don't ask me to listen to you!"

He paused abruptly before her, and his eyes, half closed, stared piercingly into her face. As she returned his stare, it began to dawn upon her that he did not seem much taken aback. At least his guilt bore no near likeness to that of Mr. Blake.

Suddenly he made a lunge for the door, jerked it open, and his voice descended the stairway, out-thundering the press.

"Jake! Oh, Jake!"

A lesser roar ascended:

"Yes!"

"Stop the press! Rip open the forms! Get the men at the linotypes! Be alive down there, every soul of you! You, Billy Harper, I'll want you here in two minutes!"

He slammed the door, and turned on Katherine. She had looked upon excitement before, but never such excitement as was flaming in his face.

"Now give me all the details!" he cried.

She it was that was taken aback.

"I—I don't understand," she said.

"No time to explain now. I've been all wrong about your father—perhaps a little wrong about you—and perhaps you've been a little wrong about me. Let it go at that. Now for the details—quick!"

"But—but what are you going to do?"

"Going to get out an extra! It's the hottest story that ever came down the pike! It'll make the *Express*, and"—he seized her hand in his grimy ones, his eyes blazed, and an exultant laugh leaped from his deep chest—"and we'll simply rip this old town wide open!"

(To be continued)

LOST HAVEN

My bark within the offing lies,
The anchor weighed, the sails unfurled;
Above me arch unclouded skies,
Before me spreads the adventurous world.

There's naught to lose, there's all to win;
Yet though I sail and seek, forsooth,
I ne'er again may enter in
To the lost, longed-for port of Youth!

Clinton Scollard

EDITORIAL

A CHANGE IN OUR DATE OF ISSUE

OWING to a change just inaugurated by the Post-Office Department in the method of transporting periodicals, MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE will hereafter appear on the 25th instead of the 20th of the month.

This change in date of publication is made because certain periodical matter, formerly sent all the way by mail, is now to be despatched by fast freight to various distributing points, and thence re-shipped by mail to its destination. This is slower than the old-time mail system, and the publishers necessarily have had to readjust their schedules.

It is, however, a sane, common-sense move on the part of the government, such as any well managed mercantile house would make. As a matter of fact, we are in hearty accord with the procedure, for it is in line with the new and practical policy of the Post-Office Department, which is turning what seemed to be a chronic postal deficit into a promising surplus. In adapting their business to meet the innovation, the magazines will aid in the development of an all-important public service which affects everybody.

We shall aim to make each issue of the magazine compensate you for the five days' wait.

A RIGHT AS A LICENSE

THE theory of States' rights found its *reductio ad absurdum* in the opposition of certain Southern Democrats to the Senate's effort to extend the publicity bill to primaries as well as elections.

The failure to include primaries in the bill would, of course, operate safely to exempt from its restrictions all those States in which the nomination of the dominant party is equivalent to an election. It would be to give to the South an unenviable monopoly of the corrupt use of money. Under such discrimination, the buying of a seat in the Senate would be practically prohibited to one section of the United States while licensed in another. It would matter little to the highest bidder for public office whether the price would have to be paid at or before the election. Nor would it remotely insure popular representation to whitewash the polls and leave the nomination open to financial rape.

Scandals like that of the Lorimer case make it imperative to the preservation of democratic tradition that members of Congress should take their seats unsmirched by even the suspicion of fraud. There being at least a nominal government by parties in this country, such an end is defeated unless the cure of publicity be applied to every phase of the electoral program.

It boots little to have a pure election follow the fraudulent purchase of opposing nominations. There is no great uplift in an honest choice between thieves. Even less is there cause for congratulation in the automatic action of an incorrupt election in ratification of a corrupt pre-election. Yet this is exactly what the technical assertion of the "rights of the States" amounts to in this instance.

NOTE—All editorials in this department were written before the end of July.