

HIS RISE TO POWER

Continued from page 3

den had been admitted into the enviable and exclusive circle of millionaires. With wealth and travel came taste. The "country house" was remodeled. The turrets were raised; wings were added to the house; the iron picket fence was removed and a hedge planted in its stead. Not all the architect's devices could make of the house a thing of beauty, so Ivy was planted and trained to enshroud its naked ugliness. A few years with nature, assisted by the English gardener, and the transformation was complete. But not enough for New Chelsea knew of another structure in course of erection on the crest of East Ridge, to be the "palatial residence," as the Globe took pleasure in reporting, "of our fellow citizen, Stephen Hampden, who it is hoped will be often in our midst."

CHAPTER III. Sunset.

A BUTLER answered John's ring and on inquiry informed him that the ladies of the Hampden family were not at home. "Will you wait, sir?" "No." And John turned away. He walked out into the country across the bridge at the confluence of North Branch and South Branch, where rises Grant's Knob. He followed the path that leads, corkcreeper fashion, to the crest of the knob, and there, in the thick of the shade of a big walnut, leaning against an old bowlder that had crowned the knob longer than John could remember, sat the object of his quest. He had an instant to look at her before she observed him, and smilingly he availed himself of it. And very charming, very alluring she was to his eyes in her light summery gown and the big, soft leghorn hat with its flowers and leaves dancing in the breeze. An open book lay in her lap, but she

was not reading. Through half closed eyes she was gazing dreamily at the hills that marched away into the blue distance. He took a step toward her. She heard him and looked up. "Hello," he said. "Good afternoon." Her salutation was very cool indeed. "Of course if you don't want me to stay"— "It isn't my hill." He laughed outright. "Her tactics never vary, it seems," he remarked. "Effective, though. Queer, isn't it, how attractive a girl becomes when she puts on that frigid, speak to me if you dare manner?" "You were very stupid not to know me the other day." "But I remembered you"— "You mean you forgot all about me."—"As an impudent, long legged, freckled timber with red hair while you"— He paused deliberately. "My hair was never red," she replied coldly. Suddenly the clouds broke away. She returned to him with a laugh. "Oh, I can't keep it up. But where did you get your courage? You weren't nearly so brave the other morning. I've been here six days. Why haven't you come to see me?" she demanded. "Well, you see," he began lamely to explain, "I've had a good many important things to think about and"— "And I was neither important nor interesting. You need practice, I see." "But you are." "You really find me interesting? You know, I've worked hard, very hard, to earn the involuntary, generous compliment I am about to receive." "I do—surprisingly so," he responded promptly. "You needn't be so surprised," she reported. "I was always rather presentable in spite of the freckles, only you wouldn't condescend to notice it. You didn't like me." "But you were such a pesky little nuisance, you know. Let me see," he added reflectively, "that was—yes, it's been ten years since I last saw you. Not counting the other morning, of

course." "No, eight," she corrected him. "You saw me after the big game, the time you saved the day. You walked right by me, looking straight into my eyes, and never recognized me. You were too anxious to reach Adele Whittington and be made a hero of by her. She was as proud as—as I'd have been if I'd had the chance—to exhibit you." "How is Adele?" "Oh, she's dreading thirty, is fighting down a tendency to fat, has begun to paint and often asks about you. Are you still in love with her? And am I a cat to talk so about her? And has she had many successors?" "No to all three questions. She gave me a bad three months, though." "I'm glad of it," she declared laughingly. "Didn't you know I was terribly in love with you? That's what made me such a pesky little nuisance. Oh, you needn't look so shocked since it was only calf love and I have quite recovered. Quite." So while the golden afternoon waned they exchanged pleasant nonsense. His spirits rose unaccountably. He was very boyish, very gay. Sometimes they rose to half serious discussion that skipped lightly and judiciously about from peak to peak of human knowledge. She had traveled much with her father, who, it appeared, had "really learned how to travel," having to make the most of his limited leisure. She knew places not starred in Baedeker— quaint, obscure corners of the earth, full of color. John helped out this part of the talk with questions more or less intelligent. She was pleased to commend his interest. "One could almost believe you had been there. You would enjoy these places, I know. Not every one does. I'd love to visit, not do, them with you sometime." "I'd like to very much. But," he answered simply, "I'm afraid it will be a long, long time before I can afford it." She turned and surveyed him thoughtfully. "Now, I like that—the way you said it, I mean. You speak of it in such a matter of fact way, as though the lack or possession of money were really of no great importance to you." "It slipped out," he confessed. "I don't like to seem to pose. I make enough for my immediate needs, of course, and some day I expect to have more—though not wealth as you probably measure it." "I'm not sure whether it is really important to me. I do not like the things it buys. But even more I like to think of the power it represents. It's that and the game of getting it that makes men want money in large quantities. Don't you think so?" He remembered certain rumors he had heard concerning Stephen Hampden's rise to wealth and he put a guard upon his lips. "I don't know much about it, I fear," which was entirely true. "After college I went to law school, then settled here. The family name and father's being a judge helped me to a quick start, I suppose. Since then I have done about as well as the average young lawyer in a small town. That is all. It is very commonplace." "That doesn't explain why you are wanted by a whole county. It's your chance to escape the commonplace, isn't it? Popularity means power and power is splendid always—I'm primitive, you see. I would use it, revel in it, make it lift me into the high places. Dad says every one believes you have a big future. Which is good evidence that you have a big future, isn't it?" "The wisdom of twenty-three," he laughed. "Oh, you won't take me seriously; Dad says I have the most intrusively

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Together They Went Slowly Down into the Valley.

executive mind he ever met. He is very nice about it. He often asks me what I think of things and men—"And then forms his own opinions?" "That," she sighed, "is the disappointing fact." "Did you plan that?" He pointed to a grove of trees on the crest of East Ridge, through which gleamed the white stucco walls of that palatial residence so frequently mentioned in the Globe. "Yes. Do you like it?" "I haven't seen it except at a distance. But why in New Chelsea?" "Why not?" she argued, with spirit. "Aren't our hills as beautiful as the Berkshires and the air as fine? Why shouldn't we enjoy the place the money

comes from? Dad says a lot of money is to come from this valley in the next few years." His face became suddenly grave. Thinking of her last words, he looked down at the quaint, old fashioned, drowsy town that lay at the foot of the knob. Far away across the hills hovered a perennial cloud, smoke of Plumville's mills. Already it was being whispered that the sudden return of the captain of finance, the building of the big house with its air of permanence, were not without commercial significance. John was a young man given to sentiment. "I was thinking of New Chelsea," he said dryly. "So the old order changeth. The world of fashion and finance comes knocking at our door. Our peaceful valley is to be exploited." "Can't you see the world moving—and New Chelsea with it?" He was not looking at the shadow, but at her, silhouetted against the sky, strong with the strength of women whose fathers have toiled close to the soil, eager, palpitating with life, for life. He wondered curiously what manner of woman she was, what lay under the precocious hardness that could see only the picturesque in a ramshackle, poverty stricken Italian village and could dismiss with a careless laugh the fate of a chick in a hawk's clutches. The line of shadow passed the summit of East ridge. The valley lay in twilight. They watched until the sun sank. "Shall we go down?" Together they went slowly down into the valley and its twilight to her home. "We have now seen," she said, "a sunrise and a sunset together." "And the evening and the morning were the first day," he quoted smilingly. "I wonder what the next day holds." "Aunt Roberta," he laughed, "hopes that I'll fall in love with you." "How perfectly absurd! Although it might redress the balance, unless," she added demurely, "I should suffer a return of my youthful malady." "Which would be doubly absurd. It's like chickenpox. Having had one attack, you are thereafter immune." They laughed gayly. On the terrace little tables were set and John renewed his acquaintance with Stephen Hampden, a short, stocky, pleasant voiced man, who in no way resembled the marauding pirate that rumor had him. Also with Mrs. Hampden, a lady who toiled not nor spun, but was always tired and talked in a languid, honeyed voice. There were also Warren Blake, solemn and handsome, and his mother a shy, faded old woman, frightened in the presence of "society folk," and not altogether happy in the Sunday splendor of best black silk and bonnet. Mrs. Hampden said Newport. Continued on Page 6

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