

WASHINGTON'S WAY

By WILLIS EMERY

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A LITTLE old building of one story in the corner of a lumber yard contained the offices of John Wadsworth. The exterior was as plain as possible and showed the touch of age. Within there were solid and costly furnishings and a general aspect of confident and long sustained prosperity.

By a desk in a railed and screened enclosure Miss Hilda Lawrence was opening the morning mail. She always opened all of Mr. Wadsworth's letters. Private communications addressed to him as political boss of the ward never came to the lumber yard.

In one of the envelopes which Hilda opened on this particular morning she found a check drawn to the order of the bearer for \$200 and signed with an illegible scrawl. It was the first time that she had seen a remittance in that form, and she glanced at the accompanying letter curiously. It was upon a plain sheet of paper, and there was no name at the beginning or the end of it.

"Indeed find balance due. You have delivered the goods and are entitled to your money. I am sick, out of town, or would have paid this in person yesterday."

Hilda knew instantly that this was payment for a political service of a dishonorable nature, and she was filled with vicarious shame at the thought of it and with a sudden faintness of surprise. It was incredible even in the face of this evidence that Mr. Wadsworth could traffic in his own influence and augment his wealth with petty bribes. The worst that she had ever believed of him was that he consorted with men who were accused of such offenses and held his leadership with their approval.

It was clear, however, that this check did not figure in an ordinary business transaction, and so instead of putting it with the others she returned it to the envelope, and thus the superscription came for the first time under her eye. The letter had been directed not to Mr. Wadsworth, but to John W. Allen. Beneath the name an address had been crossed off with a lead pencil, and the words "Try care of Wadsworth Lumber company" had been written by a carrier.

Hilda shifted her position a very little so that she could look past the edge of the screen and see Allen at his desk on the other side of the room. He was a young man whom Mr. Wadsworth had taken into his employ about a year ago at the request of a friend. At that time Allen had evidently been in sore straits, and he had subsequently shown a valuable gratitude and a steadily waning industry. Of late he had been occupied with an odd service, for which he had exhibited remarkable aptitude. He had been writing speeches for Mr. Wadsworth.

For the first time in a long career of politics John Wadsworth had found a use for oratory. A strange ambition had taken possession of him. He aspired to office. The congressman elected in that district had died. A special election was to be held, and Wadsworth had quietly passed round the word that he would be the candidate of his party in the caucus.

Up to recent days a hint from Wadsworth would have been equivalent to a nomination, and his election would have been assured. But a change had come over the complexion of the district. In a part of it where there had been small business buildings and

and that something would have to be done about it. Thus there arose in Wadsworth's mind the notion of a speedmaking tour, to be very quietly conducted, before the caucus, and thus John Allen's remarkable talent for writing short addresses became known to his employer. Wadsworth himself had never made a set speech in his life.

He had no difficulty in learning and delivering the speeches, for his confidence in his memory was absolute. He had, indeed, a wonderful gift, such as one sees in a very bright child at the so-called "memory age." A page of the dictionary to be recited forward or backward would not have appalled Wadsworth, though he was past forty-five.

When Hilda glanced across the room at Allen she judged that he was reading the manuscript of a speech which he had prepared on the previous day, doubtless the one which Wadsworth was to deliver at the Washington's birthday banquet the following evening. This banquet was to be given under the auspices of a coterie of silk stockings who were known to be bitterly opposed to the candidacy of Wadsworth, and there had been surprise among the wise when he received his invitation. The general opinion was that an attempt would be made during the evening to show the strength of the opposition within the party and perhaps start a boom for another candidate right before Wadsworth's eyes. Hilda had heard these rumors, and she was sorely grieved by the thought that a man who was at heart so honest should face his enemies with no better ammunition than a speech written by a hired rascal and delivered mechanically. This performance should take place in the name of the honored Father of His Country made it even more distressing.

"Mr. Allen!"

The young man arose slowly and crossed to Hilda.

"This was Mr. Wadsworth's mail," she said. "I opened it by mistake."

She gave him the letter, from which the check protruded. His face flushed suddenly. He looked at her steadily.

"You read this note," said he. And Hilda inclined her head.

Allen himself had not yet read it, and he supposed that it was much more definite.

"What do you intend to do?" he asked.

"I shall tell Mr. Wadsworth."

Allen showed no alarm.

"I will not remind you," said he after a pause, "that your information comes from my private correspondence. I am perfectly willing that you should lay this matter before Mr. Wadsworth, but upon one condition."

"State it."

"I can prove that this affair is entirely legitimate, but I cannot do it today. Tomorrow is a holiday; we shan't be here. My condition is that you wait until the following morning so that your accusation and my defense may be laid before Mr. Wadsworth at the same time."

"I will wait," said Hilda after brief hesitation, "though I have no faith in your defense. You have taken pay for influencing Mr. Wadsworth's action in some political matter. He will never forgive you."

"We shall see," responded Allen with such complete assurance that Hilda was deeply disturbed.

She was tempted to exercise a woman's privilege and recall her promise, but was restrained by something in Allen's manner. As he turned away he seemed to be suppressing a laugh.

During the forenoon she was busy with dictation, and at the close of it Wadsworth said:

"I shall be away this afternoon, but if you'll leave the letters for me I'll come over this evening and send them off."

Accordingly about 5 o'clock Hilda entered the private office carrying the letters. The room was dark and cold, and a gust of wind as she opened the door scattered some paper along the floor. She turned on the light, closed the window and began to gather up the loose sheets that had been dislodged by the draft. They revealed themselves as belonging to the Washington address which Allen had written. It must have been lying on the leaf of the desk. A sentence in the manuscript attracted Hilda's attention:

"Because of the undeniable greatness of Washington's nature friends of liberty were emboldened to defend our cause even in the legislative halls of England, where Pitt and Sir Isaac Newton and the celebrated Sir Boyle Roche."

Hilda stared aghast. Then she hastily put the pages in order and read the address from beginning to end with rising wrath. It was a bold and clever attempt to make Mr. Wadsworth ridiculous. It abounded in the names of historical personages, some of them dead and others in swaddling clothes at the date in question and nearly all grotesquely out of place in the recital.

Mr. Wadsworth's information about public men and measures of his own time was wide and accurate; his ignorance of older history was sublime. The chances were very great that he would learn this monstrous speech and deliver it like a parrot and be forever after the theme of jests.

Hilda looked into the outer office, but Allen had departed. It was clear enough that he would never return and that his bargain with her had been a trick for delay. She rightly guessed that he had brought his corrupt dealings to such a point that flight was imperative and that at the last moment he had accepted a bribe to betray his benefactor.

The trickery in Allen's oration was so cleverly managed and the great names were so lavishly paraded from end to end of it that Hilda dared not trust her own knowledge for a full exposure of

its snares. Therefore she took the manuscript to a public library, where she devoured encyclopedias, to the neglect of her dinner, until she could remain no longer without risk of missing Mr. Wadsworth at the office.

As she approached the building she saw that the windows of the private office were dark, but there was a light in the larger room which seemed to be over Allen's desk. Was it possible that he was there? Hilda glanced in that direction instantly upon opening the door and beheld John Wadsworth in Allen's chair reading a book.

He was so absorbed in this task that he did not hear Hilda come in. She stood by the door watching him and wondering at the change in his looks. It was merely the familiar miracle of ancestral influence. A thoroughbred is always a thoroughbred, no matter what his individual experience may have been. An unlearned man, a stranger to books, if he be the true child of book loving ancestors has always something of the student in him which may be long hidden and in a flash revealed.

Hilda felt the blood come warm into her cheeks, and the springs of tears were stirred. It was to her like a meeting with some one whom she had deeply longed to see, one whom she had loved at a distance, upon an impulse of recognition transcending the senses. From that moment, as her instinct told her, it would be impossible for her to deceive herself with the convenient fiction that her feeling toward this man was mere gratitude for kindness and consideration, for a secure and pleasant occupation and the unexpressed friendship of a strong and loyal nature.

Wadsworth paused in his reading and seemed about to turn the pages back that he might review a previous passage. Then he looked up, and his lips moved. Hilda knew that he was repeating from memory. They were face to face, and yet for an appreciable interval he did not see her, partly because of preoccupation, partly from an accident of the light, which shone now directly into his eyes. When the knowledge of her presence came to him he slowly raised his hand.

"Just listen to this," he said. "You'll say it's fine. Nobody could understand it better than you."

Then he repeated slowly and with absolute accuracy some words which he had read more than an hour ago:

"It has been said a thousand times that Washington's policy in this affair is unsurpassed in all the records of diplomacy, but such praise is both a misappreciation and an insult. There is abundant evidence for men of open mind that Washington chose this course simply because it was right, while every possible alternative savored of dishonor."

"Savored of dishonor?" he repeated.

"What do you think of it? There's the man. He knew the clean path every time, and he wouldn't walk in any other. I'm mighty glad I lost that speech."

"Lost it?" echoed Hilda, standing there with the document in her hand.

"Yes. Allen put it in my room—the address I was to deliver tomorrow—and it's gone. I must have dropped it on the floor and it was swept out. I intended to learn it this evening, and when I missed it I didn't know what to do. Allen won't be here tomorrow, and he's just moved. I don't know where he lives. At first I thought I was stuck, and then I remembered this 'Life of Washington' that he used. So it seemed to me that I might dig up something for myself. Well, I did, and that's a fact."

"I am very glad," said she. "Tell me what it is."

"I have learned," said he slowly, "that the right is just the same for little men as for big men. Washington's way and my way do not differ by a hair's breadth. The true path was the same before him as it is before me. It is the same for us all if we have the grace to see it, as my aunt would say. Avoid all that savors of dishonor. Do you know what that means for me?"

She shook her head.

"It means that I can't work for this nomination nor take it even if it should come to me unsought, as it won't. There are enough men of my stripe in Washington already—enough politicians. So that settles my speech for tomorrow night. You can write it for me on one sheet of paper. Just say that I am out of the race and that I endorse the silk stocking candidate, who happens to be a clean, able man. That's what I dug out of this book. I heard a scholar say once that the value of moral books was to supply forms of words for honest men's consciences. Your conscience always knows what's right, but not always how to say it."

"You seem to be pleased," he added, with a smile. "That's queer. The only reason why I wanted to be a congressman was because I thought it might phase you—I hoped it might."

"It certainly wouldn't," said she, amazed and puzzled. "Why, I didn't even feel sure that I'd be wanted here when you were gone."

"I hoped to take you with me," "With you—to Washington?"

"There and everywhere. Hilda, don't be frightened. I know you don't care for me. You should marry on your candidate, a man of education. And what am I? So give me my answer, and I'll take it reverently and strive to be content—if we may still be just as we have been and you won't go altogether out of my sight."

It seemed to her that she looked at him blackly, idiotically, and she was ashamed. But to him her face was a beautiful and wondrous revelation. Full of the most sacred meaning. He took her hand timidly and raised it to his lips.

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7:00	8:00				PORTLAND (Union Depot)		11:20	9:50		
8:10	9:10				leave Goble	arrive	10:10	8:40		
9:03	10:03				Clatskanie Junction		9:11	7:40		
9:24	10:26				Westport		8:51	7:19		
10:35	11:35				arrive ASTORIA	leave	7:45	6:10		
8:15	5:50	11:40			leave ASTORIA	arrive	7:40	5:20	2:45	10:45
8:35	6:10	12:05			arrive WARRENTON	leave	7:20	5:05	2:20	10:25
8:36	6:11	12:10			leave WARRENTON	arrive	7:20	2:15	10:25	
8:46	6:25	12:30			arrive Ft. Stevens	leave	7:06	2:00	10:15	
8:46	6:26				leave Ft. Stevens	arrive	7:06		10:14	
8:55	6:39				arrive WARRENTON	leave	6:52		10:05	
8:58	6:40				leave WARRENTON	leave	6:52	5:05		10:05
9:12	7:03				Clatsop		6:29	4:45		9:45
9:18	7:11				Gearhart		6:22	4:38		9:38
9:25	7:20				arrive SEASIDE	leave	6:15	4:30		* 9:30

* Sunday only. Through tickets and close connection via N. P. railway at Portland and Goble, and O. R. & N. via Portland.

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HILDA SHIFTED HER POSITION A VERY LITTLE.

considerable vacant land a surprising number of large apartment hotels had sprung up. A "silk stocking" element had thus been brought in, and its influence was becoming more and more prominent.

Wadsworth, though a very rich man and of excellent ancestry, was not a silk stocking, and his sympathies and political strength lay with the horny handed toilers and small merchants. He had been influential in establishing throughout the district a great many little clubs and societies which were not controlled by professional politicians.

It had been plausibly represented to Wadsworth that the silk stockings were trying to get a grip on the clubs

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St. Paul Fast Mail 6:15 p. m. via Spokane	Walla Walla, Lewiston, Spokane, Minneapolis, St. Paul, Duluth, Milwaukee, Chicago, and East	8:00 p. m.
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