



The New Mayor  
Based on G.H. Broadhurst's Successful Play

# THE MAN OF THE HOUR

### SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Chapter I—At the suburban home of Charles Wainwright, "high financier," he and his broker, Scott Gibbs, hatch up a scheme to corner Borough street railway stock. They rely upon the support of Dick Horrihan, boss of the neighboring city, who is coming to discuss matters. Alderman Phelan, the thorn in Horrihan's side, whom Wainwright is anxious to conciliate, is also coming. Among the members of Wainwright's household are his niece and nephew, Dallas and Perry Wainwright, and his secretary, Thompson, a secretive young man in whom the financier has implicit confidence. Judge Newman, a neighbor of Wainwright, whose continuance in office depends upon Horrihan's favor, requests Wainwright's intervention with the boss. Another visitor to the Wainwrights is Alwyn Bennett, in love with Dallas, who is calling to ask her about her rumored engagement to Gibbs. Perry is in love with Cynthia Garrison, also a neighbor. II—Cynthia is the daughter of a bank president who nine years before the opening of the story was ruined by the dealings of an unnamed dishonest financier and shot himself. His son thereupon disappeared. Mrs. Bennett congratulates herself upon the immaculate record of her son's deceased father. Dallas refuses to marry Alwyn unless he does something worthy of his family and education. Phelan and Horrihan face each other. III—Phelan defies Horrihan. Judge Newman is turned down by the boss, but at Wainwright's request Horrihan becomes suspicious of Thompson, but Wainwright scoffs at the idea. Horrihan and Wainwright makes a corrupt deal whereby the former, for a big consideration, is to procure from the board of aldermen a perpetual franchise for the Borough street railway. The boss is worried by the reform movement threatening his power at the coming election and is casting about for a candidate for mayor with a clean record. He hits upon Bennett, who has had some slight political experience. The latter accepts, but warns Horrihan that, if elected, he will be absolutely honest and independent.

### CHAPTER IV.

THE next few months were a period of unprecedented toil and excitement for Alwyn Bennett. He sometimes wondered at his own eloquence. Speech after speech he made in every section of the city—in half built suburbs, in halls where nine-tenths of his hearers were in evening dress and where familiar faces dotted the place; in overcrowded, smoke reeking auditoriums, where not one man in three wore a collar and where a score of nationalities vied for precedence.

With a versatility that delighted Horrihan the candidate managed to adapt himself to every audience and, moreover, to impress his hearers with a sense of his absolute sincerity and honesty. In the crowded, polyglot meetings he hit on the plan of speaking to representatives of each race in their own language. In a single evening, so the papers recorded, he had made speeches in English, French, German, Italian and Spanish. At some meetings toughs had tried to confuse him by interrupting with questions, joking comment or insult. For each Alwyn, without breaking the thread of his discourse, found some quick reply so apt as to turn the laugh on his tormentor and turn the audience's sympathy to himself.

At last election day came and went. And Alwyn Bennett by a fair majority carried his entire ticket to victory. Even his severest critics in the organization were forced to admit that Bennett, and Bennett alone, had saved the party from severe defeat. Horrihan's judgment and choice of men for the thousandth time in the boss' crooked political career was vindicated, and Horrihan himself was overjoyed beyond measure. Nor did the fact that he had failed to oust Alderman Phelan in the primaries wholly cloud the boss' delight.

There was, however, a slight cloud on Alwyn's triumph, for Dallas Wainwright was not present to share that triumph. Within a few days after Horrihan's visit to the Wainwright place Dallas had gone with an aunt on an eight months' tour of Europe and the Mediterranean. But Perry, who at her secret request had kept her posted on every detail of the stirring campaign, cabled her the result on election night, and the following day a reply message of congratulation crossed the Atlantic to gladden Alwyn's heart. In a letter that followed a week later Dallas asked the first political favor the

future mayor was called upon to grant. She begged that in his office Bennett would try to find a place for Cynthia Garrison, so consequence of which when the young man made up his list of personal appointments Miss Garrison found herself listed as assistant private secretary at a decidedly comfortable salary.

It was while she was working in that capacity in the mayor's private room in the city hall during Bennett's lunch hour one day in midwinter that her solitude was broken by the entrance of a visitor.

Perry Wainwright, redolent of hand-box and soap as ever, found his way past the doorkeeper and burst into the sanctum.

"Hello" was his greeting. "His honor isn't around?"

"No," answered Cynthia demurely, looking up from her work with the most businesslike air she could assume. "He's out at lunch."

"I knew he would be," grinned Perry. "I timed it fine, didn't I?"

"If you knew he was out, why did you come?" she asked severely. "You know I never receive callers during business hours. If you didn't come to see Mr. Bennett—"

"But I did. Honest I did. I have a message for him. It's awfully important. He mustn't miss it."

"Perhaps you'll leave it with me? I can—"

"No! It's got an answer to it. I'll have to wait, I suppose."

He sat down, uninvited, with an air of mock resignation that was too much for Cynthia's gravity.

"Perry Wainwright," she exclaimed in exasperation, "how often am I to tell you you mustn't bother me here in office hours?"

"Now you've hurt my feelings," announced Perry in solemn conviction. "But," he added generously, "I'll forgive you, and to prove it I'll give you a peace offering. See? Your old Boston terriers Betty and Prince Charlie, and me holding them."

And he laid before her a photograph. She caught it up, with a little cry of pleasure.

"Oh, the beauties!" she exclaimed. "We do look well in that pose," he admitted modestly.

"I was speaking of the dogs," she reproved him, with lofty scorn.

"But I'm in the picture, too," he explained. "I'm the one with the hat on. And—"

"Thank you so much for the picture. I shall keep it always. They're the nicest dogs I ever had."

"I'm nice too. And it isn't my fault I'm not a dog. I—"

"I told you once before not to give up hope. You'll grow. I'll—"

"I told that to some fellows at the club, and we tried to figure it out, and we decided you were guying me."

"What clever men you must be at that club! Are you going to the administration ball next week?"

"Are you?"

"Why?"

"Because that's the answer. I've never been to an administration ball, but if you're there I guess I—"

"Don't be silly. The administration ball is a very great function indeed. I've been asking questions about it. Not only every one connected with the administration goes, but all sorts of capitalists and other people like that. I've heard that some of the biggest financial deals are arranged during that ball. Isn't it queer?"

"Not especially. There's a deal I'm thinking of putting through myself that night if I don't get a good chance earlier—a deal that means a lot to me."

"Then why wait till the ball? Why not?"

"I'd do it now, only Bennett might come in before—"

"What a worker Mr. Bennett is!" broke in Cynthia, turning very pink and hastening to change the subject.

"In the old days we thought he was the soul of laziness, but now he's working here night and day. He's not only the youngest mayor this city ever had, but I think he's the busiest too. He—"

The eulogy on the new mayor was cut short by that dignitary's appearance from the center room. As Alwyn paused to hang up his coat and hat and pull off his gloves Cynthia bent once more over her work, while Perry straightened up and tried to look as though he really had business of pressing importance with his honor.

The months had brought changes to Bennett. There were care lines on his face, and his eyes were tired. A few silver strands, too, had crept into the darker hair on his temples. There was little now about him to suggest the idler.

"Well, old man," he exclaimed on seeing Perry, "what's the excuse this time?"

"The what?" asked the youth uneasily.

"The excuse. You come here—when I'm likely to be out—about four times a week, and always with a perfectly new excuse for your intrusion. I tolerate you for the originality of those excuses. What is today's?"

"I have no need of an excuse," replied Perry, with an air of hurt dignity. "I am the bearer of a most important message to you."

"From whom?"

"From—from— Dallas is home; landed this morning."

A light came into the mayor's tired eyes at the news.

"And the message?" he asked eagerly.

"That's the message. She's home."

"She sent you to tell me that?"

"No; not exactly that," evaded Perry, wriggling uncomfortably.

"Well, what was her message then?"

"She—she didn't send any."

"Then who sent the message that she has come home?"

"Well, the fact is I sent it myself. That's why I brought it."

"Oh, you poor idiot!" laughed Bennett. "The same old excuse in a new shape! Well, now you're here, you can stay just five minutes. I'm too busy to play with little boys today."

"Little boys! I'll be twenty-two next spring. I—"

"Any messages while I was out, Miss Garrison?"

"Yes, one," answered Cynthia. "Your mother telephoned that she would be here at half past 2. She said she had a surprise for you."

"Say," remarked Perry, feeling he was being excluded from the talk, "I'd go easy on that surprise if I were you, Alwyn. I've had surprises over the telephone myself, and they're punk. Once a girl—"

"Alderman Phelan would like to speak to your honor," said Ingram, the old doorkeeper, popping out of the anteroom.

"Show him in," answered Bennett. "Now, then, Perry—"

"Were you about to ask me to stay awhile longer?" asked the boy. "Because I'm sorry, but I can't. Goodbye. Good afternoon, Miss Garrison. Glad you liked the photo. So long. Maybe I'll bring another message from Dallas tomorrow."

"What can Phelan want of me, I wonder," mused Bennett, half aloud. "He and I scarcely— Good afternoon, alderman! I think this is the first time you've honored me with a visit."

"Then be lenient with a first offense, your honor," suggested Phelan, shaking hands with the mayor and nodding pleasantly to Cynthia as she passed out to her own office.

"Something important, I suppose," hazarded Bennett.

"Maybe it is important, and maybe it isn't," returned Phelan. "It all depends on whether that was a true story in the Chronicle today about your vetoing the Borough Street railway bill. If you've really vetoed that bill all I'll have to do is to say, 'Sorry I can't stay longer,' and get out."

"No," said Bennett, "that announcement wasn't authorized. I haven't vetoed the Borough Street railway bill. In fact, I haven't made public any decision on it. Why?"

"I'm glad to hear it, and that being the case, I'll invite myself to a seat and stay awhile. Say, your honor, on the level, that Borough bill was the rawest thing that ever came across. Gee, but they did their work with a meat ax!"

"Then you weren't one of the aldermen who voted for it?"

"Me? Nothin' doing. I don't belong to Dick Horrihan's 'solid thirteen.' He can't buy and sell me at his own terms like he does them thirteen geezers."

"And yet, alderman, from your reputation—"

"From my reputation I'm a crook, hey? Well, there's crooks and crooks. And I'm one of the other kind, if I'm crooked at all, which I deny most enthusiastically. At least I follow no Horrihan whistle."

"Then why are you here in regard to the Borough bill?"

"Perhaps it's on the theory of 'set a thief to catch a thief.'"

"Well," laughed Bennett, amused in spite of himself by the alderman's frankness, "at least you call a spade a spade."

"I sure don't refer to it vague, but as a 'utensil.' You don't need any footnote explanations in one syllable when Jimmy Phelan's talking. Every move a picture. If I hadn't been through the game from shuffle to cash in, would I be wise to what the Horrihan crowd is framing up on you now? Say, I've done some raw work in my time, but this Borough business is the conrrest yet. They must think you're the original Mr. Good Thing."

"You speak as if I were to be made responsible for—"

"And ain't you?" cried Phelan. "Sure you are. When the people get wise to what they're up against and commence to do their screaming will they remember that So-and-so framed the bill and that such and such aldermen voted for it? Not to say. What the public will remember is that you signed it. I'll go screechin' down the corridors of time as the iniquitous Borough franchise bill that Bennett signed. Catch the idea?"

"Yes," said Bennett grimly; "I understand. But what I don't see is why you should have taken the trouble to come here and warn me of this."

You've never shown any special fondness for me hitherto!"

"That's right. But I've shown bunches of unfondness for Chesty Dick Horrihan. And Horrihan's the man who's rushing the Borough bill through. Lord, what a bill! It's so crooked that if it was laid out like a street the man who tried to walk along it would meet himself coming back. Why, your honor, I—"

"Mr. Wainwright, your honor," said Ingram at the door; "says he won't detain you long."

"Let him in if you like," suggested Phelan. "I can wait. Shall I go into the other—"

"No. Wait here if you choose. His business isn't likely to be private."

"I'm sorry to break in on your rush hours," said Wainwright as he advanced to greet the mayor. "I won't keep you long. Good afternoon, alderman."

"Howdy," returned Phelan, walking over to the far end of the office, where, by falling into deep and admiring study of a particularly atrocious portrait of some earlier mayor, he denoted that he was temporarily out of the conversation.

"I'll come to the point at once, Mr. Bennett," began Wainwright. "I called to see you about the Borough Street railway bill."

"That's an odd coincidence," answered Bennett. "I was going to call you up this afternoon and ask your opinion of it. What do you think of the measure?"

"What does he think of it?" muttered Phelan, addressing the portrait in an aside that was perfectly audible. "What does he think of it? And him ownin' the rival road! Oh, easy! Ask him a real hard one!"

"You're mistaken, alderman," returned Wainwright blandly. "I am inclined to favor the passage of the Borough bill."

Phelan shot one keen glance of incredulity at the financier, then wheeled about and resumed his rapt study of the portrait.

"Yes," continued Wainwright, "I admit that my City Surface line is in a way the rival of the Borough Street railway, but in a big city like this there's sure room for both lines to carry on a prosperous business, so why should they try to injure each other?"

"Why, oh, why?" echoed Phelan, again addressing the portrait. "Can I be gettin' so old that I've begun hearin' queer things that's never said?"

Wainwright paid no heed to the interpolation, but went on:

"Of course the franchise will be a good thing for the Borough road, but it needn't hurt the City Surface line. Besides, the passing of the bill made Borough stock rise from 63 to 81. Then when that unauthorized announcement was made today that your honor would veto it the stock tumbled from 81 to 73. Just see what power rests with you, Mr. Bennett! If you should veto the bill, the Borough stock will slump to almost nothing. Think what that will mean to widows and orphans and all sorts of poor people who have invested all their savings in that stock!"

"I'll be hearin' harp' in next," groaned Phelan.

"Has the poor, dear man got swellin' of the heart, or is he maybe the advance agent of the millennium? To think of old Tightwad Wainwright—"

Ingram forestalled any reply from the financier by entering with the tidings that Thompson was in the anteroom with an important message for Wainwright.

"May I see him in here?" asked the visitor. "It is my private secretary, and—"

"Certainly," asserted Bennett. "Show him in, Ingram."

"I'd like to see a private secretary of mine come buttin' in like this," confided Phelan to the picture. "I'd chase him so far he'd discover a new street. I'd—"

The alderman broke off short. His eye had fallen on Thompson as the latter entered. Phelan stood rigid, with mouth open and eyes bulging, taking in every detail of the quiet, pallid young man's appearance. The secretary meanwhile had gone up to Wainwright and begun to deliver his message.

"Mr. Horrihan called you up, sir," said he, "just a minute or so after you left the office. He wishes you to come and see him immediately if possible."

"All right," answered the financier. "I'll come at once. I'm sorry, your honor, that I am called away just now, for I'd like to discuss this Borough bill further with you. But what I wished to express can be said in a nutshell. If I, who own the rival road, am in favor of granting the Borough franchise, I can't see why any one else should object to it. Come on, Thompson. Good day, your honor. Good day, alderman."

The financier passed out. Thompson was following when Phelan, who had never once removed his eyes from the secretary, stepped in front of him.

"Well, young man!" said he.

"Well, sir," said Thompson in surprise.

"You remember me?"

"I don't think so, sir."

"Huh! That's queer! I'm Alderman Phelan of the Eighth."

"I've read about you, of course, sir, but I—"

"But you don't know me? Never met me before?"

"I'm sorry, sir, but I can't recall it if I did. Good day, sir."

The secretary hurried out after his employer. Phelan, with a puzzled shake of the head, seemed trying to solve some elusive problem. But Bennett, who had not noted the brief scene between Thompson and the alderman, broke in on the latter's musings with the remark:

"You appeared to be amazed at Mr. Wainwright's attitude toward the Borough Street railway franchise."

"Amazed" is a mild, gentle word for my feeling," declared the alderman. "To hear that old flint heart prattlin' about widows and orphans and fair play—why, say, your honor, I know Charles Wainwright from way back, and I tell you he has the same affection for the money of widows and orphans that a tomcat has for a canary. As for fair play, he wouldn't recognize it if he was to hear it through a megaphone. He's up to something! I don't know just what. But I'll—"

"Come, come!" remonstrated Bennett good-humoredly. "I'm sure you do Wainwright an injustice. He—"

"He's a fine old bird! Do you chance to remember the Garrison case nine years back? President Garrison of the Israel Putnam Trust company—"

"Who shot himself after being ruined by a financier who was his dearest friend? Yes. What has that to do with—"

"With Wainwright? Oh, nothin' much. Only Wainwright happened to be the financier."

"No! You must be mistaken."

"Am I? I ought to know something about it. I was the chief of police at the time and handled the case. It was I who suppressed Wainwright's name. For a small consideration I—"

"Wainwright!" gasped Bennett. "Of all men! But—"

"So you see why I copped the 'mercy' and 'fair play' cards when he dealt 'em just now," purred Phelan. "There's something big behind this talk of his in favor of the Borough bill. Wasn't it at his house last summer that Horrihan offered you the nomination? That's the story, and—"

"Yes. On the 25th of July. He—"

"The 25th of July, hey? That was the day he had me out there. The day I met that fellow Gibbs. By the way, your honor, the papers say it's Gibbs' firm that's buyin' all that Borough stock. They've been buyin' it up on

the quiet for months. I begin to see a lot of funny little lights that make this thing clearer. Gibbs is buyin' Borough stock. He's Wainwright's chum. Horrihan and Wainwright frame up your nomination; then the minute you come into power this Borough franchise bill is flashed on you by Horrihan, and Wainwright begs you to sign it. Take my tip—Wainwright owns the Borough road as well as the City Surface, and Horrihan's gettin' a fat wad of stock for arrangin' the franchise. Oh, they've got your honor all tied up in ribbons, like you was a mensly booky. You and me ought to get together and fight this thing out side by side, and when once I get the Indian sign on Dick Horrihan—"

"But I've no personal quarrel with Horrihan. He—"

"You've got the same quarrel with him that the pigeon has with the muskrat. If you don't use your wings you'll be swallowed. Let me put you on to a few of the little jokers in that bill of his. You see—"

"I see more about that bill than you think," interposed Bennett. "I've worked over it night after night, with my lawyer. Don't you get the idea I've been asleep just because I haven't been making any premature disturbance?"

"I think," observed Phelan slowly, "I think I'm beginnin' to get a new line on you and understand you better. If it's any joy to you to know it, Jimmy Phelan says, 'You're all right!'"

He held out his hand, and Bennett gripped it cordially.

"I'm glad we had this talk, alderman," said he. "We're fighting from different points of view, but our main object is the same. I think we can pull together on this matter."

"We sure can!" greeted Phelan. "An' as for Horrihan, when I'm done with him he'll be rolled up in a nice bundle, an' I'll print on it in big letters, 'Use all the books you like.'"

"Mrs. Bennett, sir," said Ingram. "I thought you was single!" exclaimed Phelan.

"It's my mother. Show her in."

From the musty antechamber came the rustle of feminine attire, and Mrs. Bennett came in. Devoted as he was to his mother, Alwyn now had no eyes for her, for over her shoulder he had caught a glimpse of another face.

To be continued.

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