

Standing The Test.

By W. F. Bryan.

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Excitement was at white heat in the convention town. The ring was in the last ditch, fighting gamely. Robert Woodham, who had led many another forlorn hope and who had grown gray in the service of his party (as he had understood that service), shook his head as he went over the columns of figures in the inner office at the temporary headquarters.

Try as he would he could not figure a victory. The two-thirds rule prevailed and he could count barely a majority for the ring candidate. The nomination of Dudley for governor meant the triumph of the reform faction and the utter disruption of the state machine, for Foster stood pledged to investigate to the fullest the graft charges brought against the ring.

On the other hand, Graham Bailey was secretly pledged to forget the same promises he had made. Apparently both men were eager to uncover the graft that was the disgrace of the party, but Foster alone was sincere.

The exposure of the graft scandals would not affect Woodham directly. He had always kept himself clear of the crooked work in the party. Could it be accomplished quietly, he would welcome the feat of ridding the party of those politicians who were responsible for the scandal, but here lay the trouble! The graft was widespread. Its uncovering would disrupt the entire party machine. New and inexperienced men would be placed in charge of the party interests, and no members of the old ring could find a place in the councils.

To Robert Woodham politics was as the breath of life to his nostrils. He had played the game from the day that he had organized the Junior Marching club in the little village which had been his boyhood home. It was his sole relaxation. Other strategists played chess. He preferred the political pawn to the bits of carved wood or ivory and his board was an entire state.

Now he saw the end of it all. Unless on an early ballot he could swing the doubtful delegates into the Bailey ranks there would be a stampede to Foster. If he could arrange to stam-

with a glance directed the young attorney's gaze into the galleries.

"These ran from the four sides of the hall, and directly above the chairman's desk sat Marian Woodham. She

had come down in answer to her father's telegram the night before, and they entered the convention hall before he had explained to her the reason he had sent for her.

"You keep your eye on Graves and he will vote right," had been her father's admonition. "Your wedding present will be that house on Maple street, and you can furnish it as you like. I'll take your husband into the firm too."

It was a heavy bribe. The house alone was worth \$10,000, and a partnership with Woodham, Calla & Creagh would save Graves a weary struggle. It was scarcely to be wondered at that her face was white and wan as she leaned over the balcony rail and tried to smile at Graves.

She heard as in a dream the preliminaries. The state chairman placed Bailey's name in nomination, and her father seconded it, asking that the nomination be made unanimous. There was a derisive hoot from the opposition at this, and some one nominated Dudley Foster, and some one else made the seconding speech. There were no other nominations, and the chairman of the convention directed that the balloting begin.

It was the custom in the convention for the spokesman of each delegation to announce the vote when the name of his county was called and the lifeless voice of the clerk began.

From the first it was apparent that the contest would be close, and as Crosby county was called there was a stir through the hall. All the morning there had been rumors that some of the Foster delegates would go over to the ring candidate, and Crosby county had been one of those mentioned. As Graves rose in his place men moved forward on the edge of their chairs and Marian's face went deadly white.

For a moment Graves stood unsteadily regarding the blur of faces, in which Marian's stood out distinctly. Even at that distance he could see that she was intensely interested, and the thought that she counted on his treachery hurt for a moment, even though he realized that it was natural that she should be interested in her father's success.

To him the time seemed an hour; to others it seemed a full minute, though it was not one-quarter of that time. Then with a steady voice Graves answered:

"Crosby county casts eleven votes for the Hon. Dudley Foster."

For a moment there was the stillness of a house of death. Then the ringing cheers broke out, and a moment later Dannon county, one of the uncertain quantities, followed Graves' lead and the stampede was started, but not at all in accordance with Woodham's plans.

The hall was still ringing with the cheers of the triumphant Foster rosters when a telegraph boy approached Graves with a message that he was wanted outside. Quickly he made his way through the jubilating crowd to the hall to come face to face with Marian.

"Forgive me," he said brokenly. "I tried my best to answer your appeal, but my vote was not my own. It was a trust of the people who sent me here and I could not be false to them."

"My appeal!" Marian clapped her hands softly. "You old darling, I was so afraid that you would vote for Mr. Bailey! Do you suppose I would care for a man who had been false to his trust? I knew only this morning why father sent for me. Poor old dad! It will break his heart! But, all the same, you were in the right and I was so foolishly afraid that you might be tempted."

"I was for a moment," he confessed, "when I saw how anxious you were. Then I realized that if I bought your father's consent it would be with my own self respect, and that I never could look you in the face again."

Robert Woodham came wearily from the hall. In the last hour he had aged ten years. Marian caught his arm.

"Dad, dear," she said gently, "I sent for Mr. Graves to tell him that I would marry him, no matter what you said."

"Revolt is in the very air!" cried the old man. "I guess I will have to drop out of politics when even my daughter electioneers against me."

"I didn't work against you. I just left it to Howard," explained Marian. "He stood the test."

Woodham nodded, and with an arm about the shoulders of each he led the way to the committee room. On his right was his daughter and on his left the new found son who had stood the test, and in his heart Woodham was glad that he had.

Off With the Old Love.

A prominent Chicago lawyer tells of an amusing incident which he witnessed subsequent to a certain breach of promise suit in which he had acted as the defendant's attorney. The two were standing talking when they were joined by a third man, a friend of the client and an acquaintance of the lawyer. The third man had been out of town for some little time.

"Hello, old man, what are you looking so blue about?" the newcomer demanded as they shook hands.

"Oh, I've had a little hard luck. I've got to pay Miss Blank \$5,000 on account of a breach of promise judgment," was the disconsolate reply.

"Say, I'm glad to hear that, old fellow," the friend exclaimed fervently.

seizing the dejected one's hand and shaking it vigorously.

"Glad to hear it! I've got to pay that money, I tell you! What do you mean?" the other demanded in astonishment.

"Just that, my boy. It will be just about enough for us to set up house-keeping on. Miss Blank and I are to be married next month, you know."

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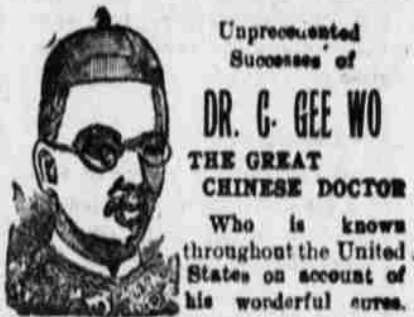
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