



The New Mayor Based on G.H. Broadhurst's Successful Play **THE MAN OF THE HOUR**

CHAPTER XV—(Continued.)

Phelan, who, passing down the corridor, had heard her last words as he reached the threshold, turned into the room.

"Excuse me for buttin' in on a family chat," he remarked, coming forward, "but I'm pretty well posted on his honor's character, an' when I hear any one knockin' him it's me to the bat. What have you got against Mr. Bennett? 'None of your measly business,' says you. 'Quite so,' says I, an', that bein' the case, let's hear all about it."

Something that underlay the seeming impertinence of the alderman's bluff speech touched Dallas. On impulse she spoke.

"Mr. Bennett," said she, "is opposing the Borough bill, knowing we shall be gapers if he defeats it. He also sold Borough stock short before he announced his veto. What can one think of a man who enriches himself at the expense of his friends?"

"Gee," cried Perry, "that's a terrible thing! Bennett's the original man higher up, I'm afraid. I wonder he isn't afraid to wear the clothes of such a wicked zeezer as himself!"

"Oh, Perry! Don't joke about it!" begged Dallas. "Can't you see the seri-

ous side of anything? We shall be penniless and dependent on—"

"Fear thou not, sister mine!" declared Perry in his best melodramatic manner. "Paupers, sayest thou? Far be it so! Little Brother Perry will guard thee from the cold, shivery swirls of a wintry wind. Maybe we can sell violets or start a fight club or—"

"Don't!" she urged, jarred by his flippancy. "You don't understand. I—"

"As for that story of his honor's sellin' stock short and makin' a pile of cash on his own veto," put in Phelan genuinely worried, "Horriگان's looked it up an' got enough facts to make him think he can prove it. He's going to make Williams tell the whole story to the aldermen tonight. It's a lie, of course, but it'll hurt his honor a lot, an' the worst of it is Bennett refuses to deny it."

"He does, eh?" remarked Perry. "Then I'll do some talking about it. I'll have to fracture a promise I made Alwyn, but I guess it's worth while."

"What do you mean?" queried Dallas in wonder.

"I mean Bennett lent me the money to sell enough stock short to make up for what you and I would lose if the bill was quashed, and he gave me a letter to his own broker. We carried it through, and now you and I stand pat in win whichever way the cat jumps. We're on velvet, thanks to Alwyn."

"He did this for us?" gasped Dallas in amazement. "But why didn't you tell me? Why did you let me misjudge him?"

"He made me promise not to let you know a thing about it, and—"

"Say, youngster," broke in Phelan, tingling with excitement, "you come chasin' along with me into the aldermen's meetin'. I'll have you get up there an' tell what you know. It'll break the lie of Williams and Horriگان's so high it'll forget to hit groun' again. Come on, son! There's sure liable to be hot dol's in the meetin' in about eleven seconds. Come along!"

had left ajar the door of two rooms. Realizing this and not wishing to be seen, Dallas shrank back toward the wall, fearful of detection. Then the voice of one of the speakers suddenly arrested her notice.

"Well," Bennett was saying in no especially civil tones, "you said you wished to speak to me in private. What have you to say? Be brief, for I am busy."

Finding herself the unwilling witness to what promised to be a confidential talk, Dallas stole toward the door leading to the corridor, but Horriگان, as was his custom, had locked it on going out. She dared not enter alone the crowded auditorium in her present state, so hesitatingly she paused, forced to remain where she was. The sound of another voice chained her to the spot, and, unconscious of eavesdropping, she stood spellbound, hearing every word distinctly through the half open doorway.

"I—I hardly know how to begin," Gibbs was replying to Bennett's curt demand. "It is a delicate subject and—"

"Then the sooner it is treated to open air the better. Is—"

"You've won the Borough bill fight," began Gibbs.

"Is that all you have to say to me?" "No. You've won, but you've lost far more. You've lost Dallas Wainwright," "I hardly need to be reminded of that," retorted Bennett, "and it is a subject I don't care to discuss."

"But listen," pleaded Gibbs as the mayor made a move as though to leave the room. "One minute! I say you've won the Borough fight. I've won Dallas. Can't we?"

"Well, what?" asked Bennett, with ominous quiet as he paused in his departure.

"Can't we strike some sort of bargain?" said Gibbs tentatively.

"Explain, please," ordered Bennett, with that same deceptive calm.

"Why," went on Gibbs, emboldened at the other's seeming complacency, "suppose you give up this Borough fight and I give up Dallas? I won her by a trick. She doesn't really love me. It is her pride, not her heart, that made her throw you over and accept me. It is you she loves, and I've known it all along, and you are in love with her."

"What then?"

"Just this," returned Gibbs, wondering at Bennett's quiet reception of the strange offer. "She will marry me because she isn't the sort of girl who goes back on her promise, especially since she looks on me as a sort of high minded martyr to your oppression, so if I hold her to her word she will not back down. Now, if you, even now, withdraw your opposition the Borough bill will go through. Let it go through and I will break my engagement to Dallas Wainwright and leave her free to marry you."

"You promise that?"

"Yes," cried Gibbs, excited. "I promise on my word of honor! Is it a bargain?"

"Gibbs," replied Alwyn slowly, "I didn't think there was so foul a cur as you in all the world. I thought I understood how utterly rotten you were, but I didn't believe there was a man living who could debase himself as you've just done."

"But—"

"Now you'll listen to me for a moment," cut in Bennett, silencing the interruption. "You say I'm in love with Miss Wainwright. Is it true. I love her in a way a dog like you could never understand if he tried for a lifetime. I'd give my life for one word of love from her, but I'd sooner go forever without that word than win it by a dishonest deed that would prove me unworthy of her. I asked her love as a free gift and tried to deserve it. She refused, and I won't try to buy what she won't give me, especially since the price would make me as unworthy of her as you yourself are."

"But you take the wrong view of it. You see, if—"

"I see this much: I'll have to speak plainer to get my view of the case into your vile mind. If ever again you meet me, stand out of my way. Don't speak to me or come where I am, for if you cross my path again I'll treat you ten thousand times worse than when I thrashed you in that football game. That's all!"

Bennett, restraining his wrath with a mighty effort, turned on his heel and strode off into the corridor, leaving Gibbs staring after him in dumb, impotent despair.

When the broker had recovered himself sufficiently to start from the room, Dallas Wainwright stood before him, barring the exit. Her face was dead white, her big dark eyes ablaze.

"—I must

things is due to explode, an' we ain't hardly at the beginnin' of the excitement yet. We're goin' to make a Fourth of July celebration in a giant powder factory look like a deaf mute funeral by the time we're done."

CHAPTER XVII.

"HES in there!" observed Phelan in high excitement, jerking his thumb toward a door leading off the committee room, "an' I've sent for Wainwright an' Horriگان to meet your honor here. An' I've fixed it so the Borough bill won't come up for ten minutes. Now, all that's left is to touch the punk to the fuse an' set off the whole giddy bunch of fireworks under 'em. Gee, but it's good to 'a' stuck to this old world just for the sake of bein' here today an' seein' what I'm due to see!"

The alderman chuckled, but his joyous anticipation found no reflection in Bennett's white set face. The two were in the committee room, whither Phelan had repaired after depositing Dallas in a chair beside her brother at the meeting and attending to one or two details of greater import.

"Yes," went on Phelan, again nodding mysteriously toward the farther door, "he's in there, trained to the minute for the blowout. There's some one else wants to see you, too—some one who'll make more of a hit with you if I'm not overplayin' my hand. But good news can wait. There's no little of it in this measly life that it generally has to be."

From the corridor Horriگان stamped into the committee room, Wainwright at his heels.

"Well," cried the boss defiantly, glaring at Bennett and ignoring Phelan. "You sent for us. What do you want?"

"One moment!" intervened Wainwright. "We are beaten. We admit that without argument. So we need waste no time going over details."

"Have you sent for us to say what you'll sell out for?" queried Horriگان coarsely, "because if you have you've only to name your price. You've got us where you want us. We've got to pay."

"I should have thought," replied Bennett, with no shade of offense, "you would know by this time that I have no price."

"Then what do you want?"

"Nothing—from you."

"Why did you send word you wanted to see us?" growled Horriگان impatiently as he and Wainwright, uninvited, seated themselves at the table.

"To tell you," answered Alwyn, glancing from one to the other, "that every step you two have taken in this whole infamous transaction from the very first has been carefully followed, and, to use your own phrase, we've got you with the goods."

"Same old bluff!" commented Horriگان contemptuously, with a reassuring wink at the somewhat less confident Wainwright.

"By tomorrow noon," resumed Bennett, "you will both be indicted on a charge of bribery. Even now there are detectives on the watch for you. Escape is impossible."

"Rot!" sneered Horriگان. "You've no evidence that will indict, and you know it. Even if you had, don't I control most of the judges and the district attorney's office besides? Swell chance you'll have of getting a conviction past that bunch! Bah! You talk like a man made of mud. I s'pose it's the affair of those Roberts notes you're counting on. That don't faze me any. My lawyer can twist that around so it'll look like a charity gift. No, no, youngster. You'll have to think of something better if—"

"And, anyhow," put in Wainwright nervously, "you can't prove any connection on my part. There's nothing against me or—"

"I think there is," retorted Bennett, wheeling about on the financier. "And even if I can't nail the Roberts bribery to you I've plenty more counts to hold you on."

"All these generalities and vague accusations prove nothing, Bennett," answered Wainwright, drawing courage from Horriگان's colossal calm and speaking with more assurance. "Mr. Horriگان and I are not schoolboys to be scared by baseless threats. This is all guesswork on your part. Come, now, name one specific charge you can prove."

"One will be enough to convince you," asked Alwyn. "Well, then, how about this as a first guess? Mr. Horriگان's bribe of \$2,000,000 in money and 25,000 shares of Borough stock for agreeing to put through the Borough franchise? For 'guesswork' that doesn't seem to me very bad."

Wainwright's hard mask of a face twitched convulsively, but the steady brain that had carried him unshaken through a thousand risky financial deals came at once to his rescue.

"An excellent guess," he agreed in splendidly feigned amusement, "but unfortunately the courts demand proof before convicting a man, and there is no proof whatever of—"

"Are you sure?" queried Bennett, turning to Phelan, he added:

"Please ask Mr. Thompson to come in."

The alderman, with an expansive grin, swung open the door of the farther room.

At sound of his secretary's name Wainwright had sprung to his feet and, dumfounded, was leaning heavily on the table, staring across the threshold of the suddenly opened door.

There, framed in the dark doorway, his face deathly pale, his eyes glowing with a strange light as of murder, stood Cynthia's brother.

His presence in the city hall was no mere chance, but the climax of a series of conferences between Bennett, Phelan and himself, dating from the night of the administration hall, when, despite his own resolve, the secretary's hand had been forced by the inquisi-



The eavesdropper.

led to marry you!" she stormed. "I let you kiss me. My lips are degraded forever by that touch of yours. I let you speak words of love to me. I broke a brave man's heart for your worthless sake. Oh, the shame—the horrible shame of it all! But I shall thank God on my bended knees that I have found out the truth before it was too late."

"Too late!" he echoed in horror, his voice rising almost to a scream. "Dallas, you're not going to throw me over? You aren't?"

"Scott Gibbs," she answered quietly, a world of wondering scorn in her level tones, "you do not even know how vile a thing you are. Now leave me, please. Your presence sickens me."

He tried to speak, but something of the ineffable contempt in her steady eyes silenced him.

Without a word he slunk out of the room and out of her life.

Phelan, agog with eagerness for the coming struggle in the aldermanic chamber, bustled past through the corridor. The alderman had many duties today, and as the performance of each brought him nearer to his longed-for revenge on Horriگان he was positively beaming with righteous bliss. Dallas caught sight of him.

"Alderman!" she called faintly.

Phelan halted, still in haste to fulfill his mission.

"Could—could I see Mr. Bennett?" she asked, a new timidity transforming her rich voice. "Do you know where I can find him?"

"Is it important? He's pretty busy."

"Very important!" she pleaded. "I must see him at once."

"I'll look him up," agreed Phelan, "but I warn you he's too busy to see you just yet. S'pose you let me take you back to the meetin'? Our bill's comin' up in a few minutes now, an' you don't want to miss it. Then I'll score up his honor for you as soon as he's got a spare minute an' bring you back here to him. Sorry to keep you waitin'." he went on as they started toward the council chamber, "but before this session's over all sorts of

and take no orders except from me. Understand?"

"I sure do!" grinned Phelan, with a delighted grin at the wraithful Horriگان. "An' I'll see thee!"

"You need not trouble!" croaked Wainwright, his throat dry and constricted with fear. "The bill is withdrawn!"

"That goes!" corroborated Horriگان. "Do you hear that, Williams? Mr. Wainwright withdraws the Borough bill. Attend to it in a rush, man. Never mind about the police."

"Well, Friend Horriگان," blandly observed Phelan as Williams hastened out. "I told you I'd cross two sticks of dynamite under you some day. Like-wise I done it."

"What had you to?"

"To do with amashin' you? Only that I put his honor on to the bill in the first place an' then slicked him on to Roberts an' discovered Thompson an' turned him over to Mr. Bennett. That's about all. But I guess it's enough to make your p'llical career feel like it had a long line of carriages drivin' slow behind it. Cheaty Dick, my old chum!"

Horriگان had turned his back on his victorious tormentor and was facing the mayor.

"Bennett," said he, "you forget I've still got that report about your father, and—"

"Tomorrow's papers will publish it," supplemented Alwyn.

"No, they won't!" contradicted Horriگان. "That would be bad politics. The report will had over till—"

"You're mistaken," interrupted Bennett calmly. "I've sent a copy of that report today to every paper in the city and have accompanied it with a statement that I shall make good to the city treasury every penny overcharged in the library and aqueduct contracts. So—"

Horriگان was staring at him open mouthed.

"Bennett," he muttered in genuine wonderment, "I don't know whether you're the craziest fool or the cleverest politician in the state."

"Your honor," humbly pleaded Wainwright, who for several minutes had been trying in vain to draw Bennett aside for a private word, "I am an old man. Is there no way of—of showing me mercy in my?"

"Yes," retorted Alwyn. "You shall receive exactly the same mercy you have always shown to your own financial enemies—no more, no less."

"Oh, cut out the whine, Wainwright!" sneered Horriگان in high contempt as he linked his arm in the broken financier's and hauled him roughly from the room. "What's happened to your nerve? You're almost as bad as Gibbs. You're still rich, and as long as you've got plenty of cash no law in America need ever bother you. There's lots of talk about indictments and arrests, and investigations, and prosecutions, and all that sort of rot. But I don't see any millionaires going to jail. Come on across to my lawyer's."

The boss and financier departed without a backward look, leaving Phelan and Bennett alone on the late scene of battle.

"Say, your honor," observed the alderman slyly, "there's one very important engagement you've clean forgot. Sit right where you are a minute, an' I'll send the party in here and see that nobody butts in on you till you want 'em to. Oh, but we didn't do a thing to Horriگان! He'll have to watch which way his toes point to see whether he's goin' or comin'!"

The alderman sped on his mission, leaving Alwyn seated alone, dejected, miserable, in the deserted committee room.

Now that the crisis was past, his heart was strangely heavy. He had won. But at what cost? At the loss of all he held dear.

Alwyn Bennett knew, too, that the real fight was but just begun—a fight that had waged since the world began and must last to judgment day—the hopeless, uphill battle of decency against evil, of honesty against graft.

Horriگان's sneering words, "I don't see any millionaires going to jail," stuck disagreeably in the younger mayor's memory. Their brutal, bald truth jarred on his belief in the inevitable triumph of good. After all, was the dreary, self-sacrificing battle against an unconquerable foe worth while? Could the great god graft ever be checked in his mastery of the earth? If—

A rustle of skirts startled Alwyn from his dark thoughts.

"Dallas!" he cried, unbelievably, as he sprang to his feet half dazed at the sight of her.

"I love you!" she said, wondrous light that transformed her face.

Slowly she came toward him, her glorious dark eyes on his, her white hands outstretched in irresistible appeal. At last she spoke.

"I love you!" she said.

THE END.

five alderman and his identity revealed.

Bennett had been let into the secret next day, and the trio had had a three hour talk from which Phelan had emerged with the gleeful air of one who had unexpectedly found a \$1,000 bill. Thompson, too, had left that conference with a look of calm, intense satisfaction that transmigrated him.

Other conversations had followed, one of them in the presence of notary, stenographer and lawyers. The trap at last was ready to be sprung.

The financier for the first time in his nine year close association with the secretary met the younger man's gaze without seeing the latter drop in deferential submission. Now he received back look for look from his former abject slave, and it was his own glance that wavered before that concentrated glare of hate.

"Thompson!" he cried, and his voice bore a world of incredulous reproach.

Before him stood the one man on earth in whom Wainwright had ever placed implicit trust; to whom he had confided his gravest business secrets; the man whom he had so shrewdly tested in countless ways and who had proved staunchly incorruptible and loyal, and now Thompson apparently confronted him in the role of traitor—of exultant spy.

"Thompson!" he exclaimed once more, almost with a groan, as the secretary advanced into the room until only the width of the table separated employer and employee.

Then the newcomer spoke for the first time, in an oddly muffled voice, as though fighting desperately for self restraint.

"No," he contradicted. "Thompson is no longer. Henceforth I am Garrison."

Wainwright's face grew gray. Breathless, unbelieving, he peered across at the pallid features of his new foe, tracing in them the likeness to the old friend whose ruin and death he had caused. The haunting resemblance that had often vaguely occurred to him when watching Thompson at work now returned in double force. But now, as in a flash, it was explained, and he knew that his secretary spoke the truth.

"Yes," went on Thompson in that same choked, struggling intonation. "I am Harry Garrison. You wrecked my father's life. You drove him to suicide. You blasted his memory. You beggared his children. I am his son—Harry Garrison. Now do you begin to understand?"

"You see, Mr. Wainwright," intervened Bennett as the secretary's pent-up rage strangled the words in his throat, "my guesswork has a fairly reliable backing."

But Wainwright did not hear. He still stared, as one hypnotized, into the blazing eyes of the man he had trusted.

"You've—you've played me false!" he managed to gasp at length. "You have—"

"Sure he has!" cut in Horriگان. "What'd I tell you last summer, Wainwright? I said then you were foolish to trust him so. I said he'd stand watching. The minute I set eyes on that lantern jawed, gimf face of his—"

"You played me false!" muttered Wainwright again, dazed and doubting the evidence of his own senses.

"Played you false?" jeered Thompson. "Played you false? Why else did I become your servant? What else have I been waiting all these horrible years for? I've sat at your desk and listened to your orders, never venturing to say my soul was my own. Now you'll listen to me."

"Why do you bother with the little traitor, Wainwright?" scoffed Horriگان. "But the dancer was standing motionless, leaning on the table, his fingers spasmodically gripping its edge till the knuckles grew white. Ridiculously like a cowed prisoner before the bar of justice, he faced his fiery eyed young judge.

"They sent for me," went on Thompson brokenly, jerkily, scarce intelligible as the suppressed hatred of a decade battled for expression. "They sent for me. My father had killed himself. My mother lay dead, struck down by grief. Our honored old name was defiled. My sister was a pauper. Who had done all this? You! Oh, they hustled it up, but I found it out! I found it out! And by my murdered father's body I kneel and swore I'd pay you for it. I'd pay you if it cost me my life. I would ruin you in name and fortune, as you ruined my father, and then—"

"And then I'd kill you, as you killed my father," he said.

With an effort that left him haggard and trembling, Thompson forced himself to calmer speech and continued:

"I answered your advertisement for a secretary. I had no experience, yet out of ninety applicants you chose me. That was fate. I knew then that one day I should have you at my feet, as now I have. Fate fought for me. I made myself necessary for you. I obeyed your hardest orders. I found out ways to please you. I fetched and carried for you. I ran to anticipate your lightest wish, as though I was your adoring son. It was I hope you're satisfied, sir, and 'Let me do that for you, sir, and I am glad to work overtime for you, sir, any time you wish,' while every minute I had to fight hard to keep from striking you dead!"

"I must go!" groaned Wainwright, shuddering. "I can't stand this. I—"

"Oh, I nabe you think me a paragon!" resumed the youth. "You took



Harry Garrison.

to testing my honesty and loyalty in clever ways that you thought I'd never discover. I stood the tests. Then you trusted me. You fool! As if that fact that I wasn't a crook proved I wasn't your enemy! You could see no farther than dollars and cents. When I didn't steal those or sell the market tips you gave me you thought I was incorruptible and devoted to your interests. And all the time I—"

"You were listening at the keyhole that day last summer," broke in Horriگان, "the time I pulled the office door open, and—"

"Then and always," answered Thompson, "and," he added, his eyes returning to Wainwright's, "I copied every confidential telegram or letter you gave me or thought I was incorruptible and devoted to your interests. And all the time I—"

"You were listening at the keyhole that day last summer," broke in Horriگان, "the time I pulled the office door open, and—"

"Then and always," answered Thompson, "and," he added, his eyes returning to Wainwright's, "I copied every confidential telegram or letter you gave me or thought I was incorruptible and devoted to your interests. And all the time I—"

I took down in shorthand every private interview of yours. I tracked the checks that completed your deals, and when they came back from the vaults as vouchers I stole them. I've got proofs, I tell you—proofs—of every crooked transaction you have dabbled in for nine years. I've secured proofs of every step in this borough franchise bribery, and I've turned them all over to the mayor here. That evidence will send you to state prison! To state prison, I tell you! To a cell, with cropped hair and striped suit! I'll send you to prison, where you'll break your heart and be branded forever as a convict! And when your term is up I'll be waiting for you, and I'll kill you! Do you hear me, you foul criminal?" he shouted, screaming hysterically and foaming at the mouth in his abandonment of insane fury. "I'm going to kill you! To kill you!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

UNDER the manic fury that blazed from Thompson's eyes Wainwright shrank back in panic dread.

"He's—he's mad!" cried the financier. "Don't let him at me!"

For Thompson seemed about to hurt himself on his foe.

"Go easy, son," adjured Phelan, laying a restraining hand on the secretary's shoulder.

The latter, recalled to himself by the pressure, relaxed his tense, menacing attitude and, with hysterical revulsion of feeling, sank into a chair, burying his face in his arms on the table before him.

"Nine horrible years!" he sobbed brokenly. "Nine awful years of slavery, of debasement! Watching, hating, longing to crush him, and, oh, the time has come, thank God! Thank God!"

"You're all in, lad!" muttered Phelan, passing an arm about the shaking youth and lifting him to his feet. "Come with me. I'll send out and get you a braceer."

Thompson, exhausted by his emotions, obeyed mechanically, but at the farther door paused for a moment and again fixed his wild, bloodshot eyes on Wainwright's haggard face.

"Remember," he threatened, his voice dead and expressionless, "when you get out of jail I'll be waiting for you. And as sure as God's justice lives I'll kill you as I'd kill a dog! Nine years waiting and—I'll murder you as you murdered my—"

Phelan had forced him over the threshold, and the slamming of the door behind the two seemed to break the strange spell that had fallen on all.

Wainwright straightened himself, glanced fearfully about, tried to regain his shaken composure and opened his mouth to speak. But the hurried entrance of Williams prevented him.

"Mr. Horriگان," gasped the excited newcomer, "I've been looking everywhere for you!"

"What's wrong now?" snapped the boss. "Has—"

"The Borough bill's come up at last, and—"

"The gallery crowd's rough housing the place? Then—"

"No, they're quiet as death; too quiet. And they have long ropes, and they're stringing them over the—"

"Call in the police, then," ordered Horriگان. "Now's the time for them."

"I don't dare," protested Williams. "Those men in the gallery are desperate. They're dangerous. If—"

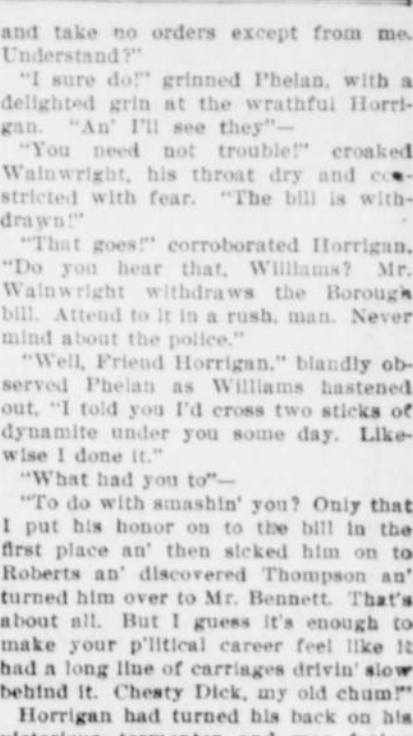
"The police?" interrupted Bennett sharply. "What are you talking about?"

"My orders!" returned Horriگان. "I sent for them. Tell them to—"

"Don't do it!" commanded Bennett in anger.

"Do as I say, Williams!" countermanded Horriگان. "Have them in and—"

"Phelan," interposed Bennett as the alderman, having left Thompson in other hands, came into the room, "go to the sergeant in charge of the police Mr. Horriگان sent for. Tell him I say he must keep his men where they are



Next Week Begins

Next Week Begins
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