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O. W. FRUM

(Continued from page 4)

superb. But they were presumptuous. Raxon was riding for a fall. He needed to be taught a lesson. It would have been wiser for McKimber to recollect that Raxon had not succeeded through any lack of strength.

"This extensive publicity campaign of yours," McKimber began, "doesn't deceive us any."

"Us?" Raxon queried.

"We who represent an organized party in this state. We know you're out to get a primary nomination, and as you've got money and a good press agent, it doesn't seem easy to prevent you. These primaries play the devil with party obligations. They encourage the malcontents and the ambitious."

"Which am I?" Raxon asked, smiling.

"You're ambitious, Raxon. You are overambitious. The Bard of Avon says that's the thing which brought the angels down."

"This is the first time I have been called an angel," said the other.

McKimber frowned. He detested flattery.

"I prefer to think of you as ambitious than to suppose you are wanting to split our ticket and let Westfield in. If one strong man with his party's solid backing runs against Westfield, he'll beat him."

"That cheers me very much," Raxon replied.

It was not easy for the domineering McKimber to hold himself in. He was accustomed to respect in the field of politics.

"You won't be the man," he exclaimed.

"And you will?"

"Unless any spiteful malcontent deliberately proves a traitor. Up-state, which I control politically, has no use for you. It doesn't know about you. I asked a man from Wayne county the other day if he'd ever heard of Paul Raxon." McKimber smiled. "He said he never went to moving pictures."

"Your mistake," Raxon said, "was that you did not ask his wife. The women know me, McKimber. My 'Better Architecture Leagues' are springing up everywhere. There's a flourishing one in Wayne county. The larger cities, such as Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and Utica, are taking the thing up admirably. Politicians of your old-fashioned kind resent women in public life, and you don't con-



"He Said He Never Went to Moving Pictures."

ceal this. Politically, women are hypersensitive because they know they have not accomplished what the world expected of them. I admit your up-state strength exceeds mine, but what about New York city?"

"A stronghold for Westfield."

"Not so much as you imagine." Raxon yawned a little, as though the subject wearied him. "At all events, it will be an interesting experiment."

"Experiment!" McKimber cried, shocked at his callousness. "It will be a tragedy for the party."

"It will be your finish," Raxon retorted. His manner had no animus in it. He had neither raised his voice nor shown heat as McKimber had. "Like all old-time politicians, you lack mental agility and you won't reconcile yourself to new conditions. In the past you have been of great use to the organization. Today you are merely amusing." McKimber flushed red and instinc-

tively clenched his big fists. Paul Raxon noted the gesture.

"That demonstrates it perfectly," he said. "When you lose a point or hear a disagreeable truth you want to hit a man. Elemental stuff. We are here to discuss political conditions in this state. I think that is how you put it."

"You want me to back down and leave the field to you. I refuse. If the party thinks I've the better chance, they'll knife you in a minute. It isn't possible, surely, that you believe gratitude has anything to do with practical politics?"

McKimber did not answer immediately. He was conscious that he had allowed personal antagonism to color his conversation. He adopted the confidential tone which had often won success for him.

"Raxon," he began, "I'm putting my cards on the table."

"Save yourself the trouble," Raxon replied. "I can see them just as well when you hold them in your hands. All you need to understand is that I have a better chance than you to go to Washington."

"If we two fight each other, Westfield goes," McKimber said earnestly. "We need a senator at Washington."

"That's why I intend to go, as you may as well tell your friends. I've

been working much longer than you can guess for this very end."

"Don't you realize you will be denounced as a traitor to your cause?"

"If the cause means so much to you, throw your influence my way. If you did that, Westfield wouldn't have a chance."

"You're d-d well right," McKimber shouted. "The man I indorse would get in even if you were he. I'll tell you just this, Raxon. From now on I'm going to devote myself to showing you up for the crooked ward politician you are. My God! To think you expect me to work for you!"

"If you're going to be abusive," Raxon said coldly, "we may as well stop."

McKimber struggled into a little less violent mood. He might yet be able to divert the Raxon ambition to some less lofty height.

"I take that back," he said. "I recognize that you deserve some reward for what you've done in the past, but I'm entitled to the nomination. It is my just reward I want." McKimber's voice became almost conciliatory.

"Don't you see the justice of it? I want in my old age the opportunity of serving my country."

"And I," Paul Raxon sneered, "want in my early middle age the opportunity of serving myself. Why drag your country in? Do you think I'm a political idealist just because bad architecture offends me?"

McKimber rose to his feet. He knew he had lost, and he wanted to go before he forgot the slender, sneering man was his host.

"They told me you were a dangerous man," he said slowly, "but I don't think they gauged your rottenness correctly."

"I take good care to keep that from them."

"But you're giving it away to me, a confessed rival."

Raxon laughed. The spectacle of this tall, portly man, whose career had been so successful, amused him.

"The trouble with you, McKimber," he said, "is that you don't understand you are a corpse. Politically, you are dead and buried. You are not a rival. Don't flatter yourself to that extent."

"I tell you," McKimber thundered, "all the world shall know what has passed between us."

"If you don't lower your voice, all the world will hear. You're not a broadcasting station. Sit down. I sent for you because there's a lot I have to say which you wouldn't care to miss."

Reluctantly, McKimber sank back in his chair. He was wrapped by a certain and unwelcome uneasiness. The man facing him seemed so secure, so unconcerned, so sure of ultimate triumph.

"The first thing to tell you," Raxon began, "is, I am going to Washington. You will quit in my favor and lend me all your great influence. Naturally you must have an excuse which seems a true one. I have it all ready prepared. You are too heavy even for your height, and the pouches under your eyes are unhealthy signs. You had better drop out, because your specialist tells you there is heart and kidney trouble. I shall refer to the fact in my speeches with great regret."

McKimber spoke with deliberation.

"They told me you were dangerous, and I know you are a traitor to your party, but not until this moment did I believe you were absolutely crazy. They call your sort of madness megalomania." McKimber rose to his feet.

"I've met all sorts of knaves and fools in politics, but you're the worst yet."

"What a senator you would have made!" Raxon commented. "Do you suppose I should have talked like this if I had not been certain you were harmless, a rattle with his poison sacs extracted? My success has come mainly because I understand human motivation. I'm going to show you how it is that when you leave here it will be to start a Raxon boom in your own city. Sit down, McKimber."

John McKimber, who prided himself upon taking orders from none, dropped again into his seat. It seemed to him he was talking to a Raxon he had not until now understood. He found himself noticing what a cruel mouth the other had, and how in those brown eyes were little flecks of red. Paul Raxon gazed at him as an executioner might stare at a prisoner delivered to him for death. McKimber knew that he had been holding too cheaply one who had a dynamic and evil personality.

"If I stay," he said huskily, "it will be to hear you give away more secrets about yourself. Perhaps I shall learn by what trickery you got this place, and how it was you sent Hazen Brewer to his grave."

"I got this place," said Raxon with his old urbanity, "as I have got everything else in my life, by using men as tools. I studied men and found them pugnacious, noisy, and vain. It was hard to influence them by my subdued personality, even though I had the right on my side. I do not mix well. I knew that had to be overcome. In other words, I determined to develop something to make up for it. My success has come from finding, almost unerringly, the weak spot in every man's make-up. I got my chance at International Motors by finding out so much of Brewer's life in London that he was forced to take me in to protect himself."

"You're a d-d blackmatier," McKimber cried hoarsely.

"I am," Raxon agreed. "The phrase does not offend me in the least. Why should it? Is there any more powerful weapon? Most traitors in the great war were forced into espionage because the enemy threatened exposure as the price of refusal. In the drawer before me are two articles. One is an automatic pistol." Raxon opened the drawer and put the weapon on the writing table at which he sat. "I am not going to threaten you with it. That is old-fashioned, stupid stuff. I am merely reminding you I have it at hand if you should attack me."

There was undisguised amazement in the bigger man's voice.

"Attack you? What for?"

"Because exhibit 'B' will cause you considerable distress, and I have known men of your type to see red in such moments." Raxon balanced a square envelope in his thin hands.

"If it's blackmail you are thinking of in connection with me," said McKimber scornfully, "you are wasting time. It's you who are using old-fashioned stupid stuff, not me. I tell you, my life is an open book."

"With one uncut page," Raxon remarked. "I've cut that page. It cost time and money, but it was the best investment I ever made. Think back a bit over this life of yours that is an open book. Is there anything in it that might hurt you if it got out?"

"Not a thing," cried McKimber defiantly. But there was lacking that ring of confidence he had previously shown. Fear was mastering him. There was no madness about this steady-eyed man opposite.

"Very well," said Raxon briskly. "You force me to speak. You talk of yourself as a self-made man who rose from being a machinist to the ownership of a vast organization. That's true. In Who's Who it's written for all the world to see. But there are certain omissions. I can supply them. That's why you are here, McKimber, to listen to the writing between the lines. When you were twenty you left Utica for St. Louis and got a job in the Davis foundry. There you studied drafting, and three years later, having made good, entered the employ of William Graham, Mrs. McKimber's uncle, who owned the Rochester Steel

and Iron mills. Later you married his niece."

"Well," said McKimber, his throat constricting, "what about it?"

"Your employer singled her out of all his relatives and left his fortune to her on condition she married you. He had confidence in you. He had read the open book and liked the contents. If he had had access to that uncut page, he would have known that your first wife was still living."

"I divorced her," McKimber cried. "I can prove it."

"The decree was not made absolute until three months after you married your employer's niece. It's a nice legal point, and I've no doubt his other nephews and nieces would be quite ready to fight it. If the condition of getting the fortune was your marriage to Graham's niece, you did not fulfill it, because you did not marry her. A bigamous union is not marriage in the eyes of the law. You must have known that, or you wouldn't have gone through a second ceremony. The first marriage was by a justice of the peace. The second was at a New York church. You obtained Graham's fortune under false pretenses, and you were a bigamist. It's no good denying it."

"It was all done innocently," McKimber protested. "As God is my witness, I thought I was free to marry. In the divorce suit there was nothing that reflected on me personally."

"What has that to do with it?" Raxon asked cynically. "It may be that you thought you were free to marry. But that makes no difference. The world won't think that. Westfield won't think that. Nor will the big papers that are supporting him. You're through, McKimber, that's all. You'll never hold public office again if this gets out. That's not all. You are going to help me into the senate, and your friends are going to help. If your friends try and knife me, you are the one who will bleed."

McKimber sat motionless. Raxon cared nothing about his innocence. Guilty or innocent, McKimber was the loser. He turned dull eyes toward the envelope Raxon held up.

"In this is the entry of your first marriage. Someone cut a page out of the register and offered it to me for sale. I bought it. There are also some letters you wrote to your first wife when you found she was a secret drinker. Her son by a second marriage sold them to my agent. Pathetic letters in their way, but you know how the modern yellow newspaper laughs at pathetic things, especially when they affect political opponents. I hope the need for publication may never come. Some day they may be yours."

"What do you want for that envelope, if it contains what you say?"

"You'll never have half enough money to buy it. Why do you persist in underestimating me? Realize here and now that you are beaten. You will never go to the senate. If I don't go, then Westfield wins, and you will be the traitor to your party. No further discussion is necessary. What is it to be? Absolute obedience, or do these things go to Westfield?"

McKimber's head dropped. There was a consciousness of physical feebleness about him, a devitalization which he had never before experienced. It was curious, he reflected, that the sense of anger had left him. It was the measure of his defeat.

"I can't talk now. Tomorrow my brain will be clearer." Unsteadily he rose to his feet and walked to the door.

Paul Raxon watched him go out, a broken man. Oriental in his absence of pity, he enjoyed humiliating one of McKimber's domineering sort. To bring low such gave him an increased sense of power. He disliked big, arrogant men with loud voices and assured gestures.

(To be continued)

Charity Grange Meeting

Charity grange met Saturday evening, having a fair attendance for this busy season.

Gas lanterns having been successfully installed, there is plenty of good light now at the hall.

Blanche Steinke read her essay on which she received second prize, in a statewide contest among the juvenile grangers.

Wayne Veatch gave a very good talk on patriotism.

Those present were glad that it happened to be Francis Kizer's birthday, as a huge angel cake was passed around and all enjoyed the treat.

Many happy returns of the day, Mr. K.

Tractors and farm machinery are revolutionizing farming just as they have revolutionized road building—less farm labor shows greater production.

There is \$8,000,000,000 invested in the electric light and power industry in the United States—more than \$65 for every man, woman and child.



Vacation Fares

—for summer outings

Reduced roundtrip fares are in effect throughout the summer season. Tickets with 16-day and season limits; week end, Saturday to Monday, Friday to Tuesday, Sunday only tickets.

Travel comfortably and at low cost on the train. You can save money by taking advantage of summer roundtrip fares. Save precious vacation hours—save nervous energy, too, in traveling by train.

FAMED RESORTS

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Monday, July 25

8 p. m.—Farm reminders

8:05—4-H club activities

8:30—Agricultural situation—reports

8:45—"Handling and Baling Hay to Make Better Grades," D. D. Hill

9—Benton county extension service news, C. R. Briggs

Wednesday, July 27

8 p. m.—Farm reminders

8:05—Timely farm topics

8:45—"Developing New Varieties of Potatoes," G. R. Hyslop.

8:30—All around the state

Friday, July 29

8 p. m.—Campus news

8:10—Hitting the mountain trails in Oregon

8:30—Summer chats with the homemaker

8:45—Summer poultry talks, No. 7

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