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CHAS. WEEKLY

Referee's Sale

The last of the David Smith lands, consisting of the fine 171-acre farm just north of Tallman, and the late home place of about 3 acres in Tallman, will be sold by the undersigned at the court house April 7, 1911 at one o'clock p. m., public sale.

J. N. DUNCAN,
Referee.

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the nation without fear or favor; men who will hew to the line under any and all conditions."

A qualm smile was playing under the drooping mustache of the Hon. Senator Sagebrush.

"I reckon we do need a few men like that, Evan—need 'em mighty bad. Think you could fill the bill if you had a right good chance?"

The potential heaver of political chips smiled.

"I'm not likely to get the chance very soon," he returned. "Just at present I am still a legal resident of the good old commonwealth of Massachusetts and a member of its bar, eligible to office there and nowhere else."

"You'd be a citizen of this state by the time you could get elected to an office in it," suggested the senator.

"I know—the required term of residence here is ridiculously short. But you forget that I am as unknown in the sagebrush hills as you are well known. I couldn't get a nomination for the office of poundkeeper."

David Blount was chuckling softly. "Sounds right funny to hear you talk that way, son," he commented. "Mighty near everybody will tell you that the slate hangs up behind the door at Wartrace, and I don't know but some people would say that old Sagebrush Dave himself does most of the writing on it. Anyhow, there's one place on it that is still needing a name, and I guess yours would fit it as well as anybody's."

The young man, who was so lately out of the well considering east, gasped.

"Heavens!" he ejaculated. "You're not considering me as a possibility on the state ticket before I've been twenty-four hours on the ground, are you?"

"No, not exactly as a possibility, son. We'll call it a sure thing if you want to. It's this way: We're needing a political housecleaning pretty bad this year. We have good enough laws, I guess, but they're winked at any day in the week when somebody comes along with a barrel. The fight is up between the people of this state and the corporations. It was up two years ago, and the people got the laws all right, but forgot to elect men who would carry them out. This time I think the voters have got their knives sharpened. We've been a little slow catching step, but the marching orders have gone out. We're going to clean house this fall."

"Not if the slate hangs behind your door or any man's door, father," was the theorist's grave reminder. "Reform doesn't come in by that road."

"Hold on, son; steady go easy's the word. Reform comes in by any old



trail it can find mostly and thanks its lucky stars if it doesn't run up against any bridges gone or any mudholes too deep to ford. We've got a good man for governor—not any too broad, maybe, but good—church good; he's a min-

ister of the gospel and the president of a church university. No man has ever said he'd take a bribe, but he isn't heavy enough to sit on the lid and hold it down. Alce Gordon, the man who is going to succeed him next fall, is all the things that the present governor isn't, so that is fixed."

"How 'fixed'?" queried the young man, who, though he was not from Missouri, was beginning to fear that he would constantly have to be "shown."

"In the same way that everything has to be fixed, if we're going to get results," was the calm reply. "After the governor the man upon whom the most depends is the attorney general. The present incumbent, Dortcher, is one of the candidates, but we've crossed his name off. The next man we considered was Jim Rankin. In some ways he's fit; he's a hard fighter, and the man doesn't live who can bluff him. But he's poor, and he wants to be rich, and I guess that lets him out."

All this was directly subversive of Evan Blount's ideas of the conduct of affairs political in a free country, but he was willing to hear more. "Well?" he said.

"What we want this time is one of your 'hew to the line' men, son. Reckon you'd like to try it?"

The young man who was less than a week away from the atmosphere of the law school and its theories was fairly abashed. That his father should be coolly proposing him for a high office in the state to which he was as new as the newest emigrant seemed blankly incredible. But when the incredulity began to subside the despotism of a machine which could propose and carry out such unheard of things loomed malevolent.

"I'm afraid we are a good many miles apart, father," he said, unconsciously using one of his father's favorite speech forms, when the proposal had been given time to sink in. "America is supposed to be a free country with a representative government. Do you mean to say that you and a few of your friends can set aside the will of the people so far that you can nominate and elect anybody you please to any office in the state?"

The farseeing eyes were twinkling again. "Oh, I don't know about our being so far apart," was the deprecatory protest. "You're just a little bit long on theory, that's all, son. When it comes down to the real thing somebody has to head the stampede and turn it, and if we don't do it the other bunch will."

"What other bunch?"

"In this case it's the corporations—the timber people, the irrigation companies and, most of all, the railroads."

Gantry seems to think that the railroads are persecuted, or his railroad a least."

The senator pulled his horse down to a still slower walk. "Where did you see Dick Gantry?" he demanded.

Evan told of the meeting on the veranda of the club, adding the further fact of the college friendship.

"Just happened so, did it," queried the senator, "that getting together last Saturday night?"

"Why, yes; I suppose so. Dick knew I was in Boston, and he said he had meant to look me up."

"I reckon he did," was the quiet comment; "yes, I reckon he did. And he filled you up chock full of Hardwick McKellar's notions, of course, I guess that's about what he was told to do. But we won't fall apart on that, son. Tomorrow we'll go down to the city, and you can look the ground over for yourself. I want you to draw your own conclusions and then come and tell me what you'd like to do. Shall we leave it that way?"

Blount acquiesced, quite without prejudice to a firm conviction that his opinion when formed was going to be based on the merits of the case, upon a fair and judicial summing up of the pros and cons.

He felt that it would be striking at the very root of the tree of good government to allow himself to be the candidate of the machine. But, on the other hand, he saw instantly what a power a fearless public prosecutor could be in a misguided commonwealth where the lack was not of good laws, but of men strong enough and courageous enough to administer them.

He would see. If the good to be accomplished was great enough to overbalance the evil—it was a temptation to compromise, a sharp temptation, and he found himself longing for Patricia, for her clear sighted comment, which, he felt sure, would go straight to the heart of the tangle.

It was that thought of Patricia and his need for her that made him distraught and absentminded at the Wartrace Hall dinner table that evening, and the father, looking on, suspected that Evan's taciturnity was an expression of his prejudice against the woman who had taken his mother's place, and when the son, pleading weariness, retreated early to his room the suspicion was confirmed.

"You'll have to be patient with the boy, little woman," said the master of Wartrace when Evan had disappeared. "I shouldn't wonder if Boston had put some right queer notions into his head." The little lady looked up from her embroidery frame with a wonderful

smile wreathing itself at the corners of the sensitive mouth. "He is a dear boy," she said, "and he is trying awfully hard to hate me. But I shan't let him, David."

CHAPTER VI

ON THE WING OF OCCASIONS.

FROM the time it was heralded in the mammoth New Year's edition of the Plainman as "the newest, the finest and the most luxurious hostelry west of the Missouri" the Inter-Mountain hotel in the Sagebrush capital had been the gathering place of the political clans.

After the solid costliness of Wartrace Hall and the thirty mile spin in a high powered roadster, which was only one of the three high priced motor carriages in the Wartrace garage, Evan Blount was not surprised to find his father registered in permanence for one of the private dining room suits at the Inter-Mountain.

It was very evident that the simple life which had been the rule of the Circle Bar ranch household had become a thing of the past, and, though he charged the new and extravagant order of things to the ambition of his father's wife, he could not cavil at it, since he was himself a sharer in its comforts and luxuries.

For the first few days he was left almost wholly to his own devices. Beyond giving him a good many introductions as the opportunities for them came in the semipublic life of the hotel his father made few demands upon him, and they met only at luncheon and dinner, the first of which was usually served in their suit, while for the latter they went to the cafe. But Gantry was back, and he was always available.

Almost before he realized it Blount had been put in touch with the busy, breezy life of the city and was exchanging nods or handshakings with more people than he had ever known in Cambridge or Boston.

"Pretty good little old town, isn't it?" laughed Gantry one day when he had tolled Blount away from the Inter-Mountain luncheon to share a table with him in the Railway club. "Getting so you feel a little more at home with us?"

"If I'm not it isn't your fault, Dick, or the fault of your friends. Naturally I expected some sort of welcome as David Blount's son, but that doesn't seem to cut any figure at all."

Gantry's smile was inscrutable.

"The people with whom it cuts the largest figure will never let you know anything about it. Just the same, it's cutting a good bit of ice. I have met a dozen men, more or less, within the past day or so who have discovered that you are the brainiest thing that ever escaped from the law school."

"Tommyrot!" derided Blount.

"It's a fact. And they are prophesying all sorts of a future for you." And again Gantry's smile was broadly sly.

"Like what?" scoffed the listener.

"Well, for one thing, they are saying that you are pretty sure to run for attorney general this fall. It's all over town. Everybody's talking about it—talking a lot and guessing a good deal more."

Blount was balancing a spoon on the edge of his claret glass and frowning abstractedly. It was the first little discord in the filial harmony—almost a breach of confidence. Without consulting his wishes, without waiting for his decision, his father had committed him—"taken snap judgment upon him," was the way he phrased it.

"Dick, will you believe me if I say that I haven't authorized any such talk as this you've been hearing?" he asked.

This time Gantry's smile was a grin. "The honorable senator took it out of your hands, did he? You'll understand that I don't mean any disrespect when I say it's just like him. If he has slated you, you are booked to run, and if he runs you'll be elected. Those are two of the things that say themselves in the Sagebrush State."

Blount was indignant—"Justly indignant," he called it.

"If that is the case, Dick, it is high time that some one should break the charm. I haven't said that I would accept the nomination, and I am not at all sure that I shall say so. And if I don't say so that settles it."

Gantry was plainly shocked. "You don't mean to say that you've got nerve enough to buck the old m—your father, I mean? Why, great cats, Evan, you don't know what that stands for in the greasewood hills!"

"And I don't care, Dick. Up to this present moment I am a free moral agent. I haven't surrendered any right of decision to any one so far as I am aware."

Gantry's eyes dropped to his plate, and his rejoinder was not altogether free from guile.

"Will you authorize me to contradict the talk as I can?" he asked quickly.

(Continued next week)

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