

The Matriculation of Courtney

BY MARGARET SUTTON BRISCOE

A letter from Hon. George Worden to the Hon. John Wilson Wells:

DEAR SIR,—I understand that Mr. Ai, as chief heir to the Varden estate, will practically own the Consolidated Mill Company. The Swampside Mill has held its own against the Consolidated, solely because Mr. Varden in his life allowed it to do so. On my election to office I presented the shares of Consolidated stock owned by me to the Children's Hospital of your city. Do you happen to know any persuasive young lawyer who can, for the present, represent this stock owned by the hospital, and perhaps protect the Swampside Mill? He must be a man who understands human nature, and who may possibly reach that rather complex organism which, for lack of a better term, we may call Mr. Ai's bowels of compassion. It is rather a large contract, yet you may have such a paragon up your sleeve. You know my sentiment concerning the old mill, and that two old friends of mine are largely dependent upon the income derived from its earnings. If you can aid me here, it will place me under great obligations.

Yours faithfully, GEORGE WORDEN.

Judge Wells leaned back in his office chair, thoughtfully nodding his head, acquiescing yet dubious, as he conned over the points of this letter.

"In a word," he said, aloud, "Wanted—a second George Worden. Well, your Excellency, these do not grow by the wayside.—Come in!" This at a knock on the outer door.

"Mr. Courtney? Come in, sir. Ah me! If I had your youth, sir, your breadth and height, I too might see the joke so early in the morning."

Joe Courtney checked the high, crowing, contagious chuckle he allowed himself with his intimates. His boyish ways always seemed to Judge Wells humorous-

ly out of keeping with his great height and broad shoulders. His wide-awake, clever face, with its clean-cut, thoughtful features, a slight mustache that curled up rather frivolously towards a pair of very boyish, very gay, very blue eyes, taken with a manner as pleasantly irresponsible at one moment as it was desperately in earnest the next, made— In a word, Joe Courtney was good to look at and delightful to talk to—especially if one felt a trifle old, as the Judge did feel now and then so early in the morning. He frankly rejoiced in Courtney's society, and, old mental epicure that he was, sought it deliberately for its fresh tonic quality.

"What have you there?" he asked. He took the newspaper clipping Courtney handed over to him and read portions of the extract aloud:

"'Charity can find in most public men something to admire and praise. In Mr. Ai's career it can discover little of this kind. . . . The most unblushing demagogue yet produced in a city unusually prolific in that sort of weeds. . . . He openly defies public opinion and laughs at public sentiment.'"

"Describes him to a hair, doesn't it?" chuckled Courtney, rubbing his hands. "I cut that from the morning's paper. George! how I do hate that man!"

Judge Wells looked up over his glasses at his favorite, not quite with approval.

"Describes him as you know him, perhaps. But you want to remember that laughing at public sentiment proves nothing as to Mr. Ai's private sentiments. His 'Per K' dines with you to-night, you said, I think. It may be harder to tear her from him than you imagine. Her name is—Miss Ireland?"

"Yes—Catherine Ireland."

"Katharine with a K, of course."

"No; with a C."

"Where, then, does 'Per K' come in? But perhaps Mr. Ai calls her 'Kitty'—"

"Oh Lord! no! She wouldn't stand

that. She's a good little thing. I don't know where they got the 'Per K,' but 'Per K' she is. Her aunt confessed to me she was, in so many words. Her aunt and her aunt's children are all of them more or less dependent on 'Per K's' exertions. You know how I happened on them, by an accident, and how they came to be my tenants, in the rear of my apartment. All that's ancient history. But Ai's office is no safe place for any woman—a self-respecting woman. And when she is young, and refined, and sensitive, and— I can't call her pretty, but she's nice-looking."

"There is no question as to all that," interrupted the Judge. "And her brother was perfectly right in urging her to leave Mr. Ai's employ. Nothing that she may gain for him through staying on there is worth the possible experience and doubtful prestige of being in such an office as Ai's. But her brother's letter was written some time ago, was it not? It doesn't seem to have moved 'Per K.' You wanted me to look at his letter, didn't you?"

"Yes, sir. I have it here. Now to run over the case again as it stands: Miss Ireland—otherwise 'Per K'—dusts my study—or I think she does; I know none of the others of the family would keep it so orderly. One day I find this letter on my floor. The handwriting is peculiar. I recalled it at once as the writing of a client of mine—one of my first. The letter, you see, has no address and no signature, and I supposed it had dropped out from some of my own files. But so soon as I read the letter I remembered that Miss Ireland's aunt had told me of an incorrigible brother of Miss Ireland's who would run away from home, and who finally disappeared, they never knew where, some five years ago—just the date of my client's conviction. The address given is the prison my client was committed to. I never believed that the man gave us his true name; evidently he did not. In the body of this letter the writer calls his correspondent 'sister.' Here—where he forbids her to go on with her efforts for his pardon. You see he warns her that she must not place herself under any such obligations to her employer. The man he refers to is certainly Ai. He describes him—and

well—as a 'dangerous, good-natured blackguard'! I've brought with me several of my client's old letters, written to me at the time of his trial, for you to compare with this one. But I feel sure it is the same man. I fancy that Miss Ireland has somehow tracked her brother to his prison, and kept the fact to herself that she is communicating with him. I know if her aunt knew it she would tell me all about it, for she can't help telling all she knows."

Judge Wells, with his customary exact care, spread out the letters on his desk, carefully comparing them.

"Curious, isn't it?" he said at last. "It's a small world we live in. You have built up quite a pretty little case here. I think you may safely act on the certainty that your client wrote this letter, and also that he is 'Per K's' brother. You understand that while I can by no means be sure of influencing Governor Worden to grant a pardon, your client's case, as you have presented it to me, seems to me most worthy of consideration, and I will exert myself to the utmost in his behalf. It is the kind of story that would move George Worden. I feel sure—well, at least I can promise you to bring as strong a pressure upon the Governor as Mr. Ai may command. No, no, Mr. Courtney! We don't know anything about it. Mr. Ai may have a very positive pull with the Governor, for aught we know to the contrary. That's where, in my opinion, this little case of yours is weak. You are working on the theory, first, that Mr. Ai has no power whatever with Governor Worden—I wouldn't be too cocksure of that,—and, secondly, that Ai, in order to exclusively hold 'Per K's' services, is falsely assuring her that he has this personal influence. Makes Ai out pretty black, doesn't it?"

"Well, isn't he? I don't believe the Governor would touch the man with a pair of tongs!"

"Um-m-m," murmured the Judge. He pushed aside the open letter he had been reading when Courtney entered. "Worden's a statesman *and* a politician. Perfectly upright—but a cautious man."

Courtney's features were not given him to conceal his emotions. The Judge laughed as he looked at him.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Courtney. I forgot for a moment your sentiment regarding our Governor."

"That's all right, Judge. You ought to know him better than I do. I confess I wouldn't like to think of his dicker-ing with a thing like Ai."

"George Worden," said the Judge, placidly, "has always had a curious faculty for getting on with every kind of man. He ferrets out the best in a man—the virtue of his vice, if nothing else—and works along with that. For years Mr. Varden, unscrupulous as he was, ran that Consolidated Mill Company to suit George Worden, and for no better reason than that Worden wished it so."

Judge Wells paused a moment, looking up at Courtney thoughtfully.

"Have you ever met Mr. Ai personally?" he asked, abruptly.

"No, thank God! I've seen him on the platform. That's near enough!"

Judge Wells stretched out his hand and folded Governor Worden's letter, laying it carefully to one side.

"To go back to 'Per K,'" he said. "You certainly have been indefatigable in this matter, gratifying a fanciful old man's whim. I hardly know how to express my appreciation."

"I only trust all may go well to-night, sir, and that 'Per K' will be at work here for you before the month is out. Good day, sir. I'll drop in in the morning with the result."

Judge Wells sat looking thoughtfully at the closed door after Courtney had passed out. His gay spirit, his abundant life, seemed to the old man as if still present, fading away slowly.

"Fascinating boy!" he said, indulgently. "Charming lad! If he were just a little older. Understands human nature now, including his own, about as much as—that pen-wiper!"

He took up Governor Worden's letter once more, glancing over it and shaking his head.

"No," he said, decidedly. "He couldn't do it—not yet. Pity, too! He needs the opening. Well, it's no use." And he filed the letter in one of his desk pigeonholes.

"What? You don't like Chianti? You do! Here, Prince Bismarck—"

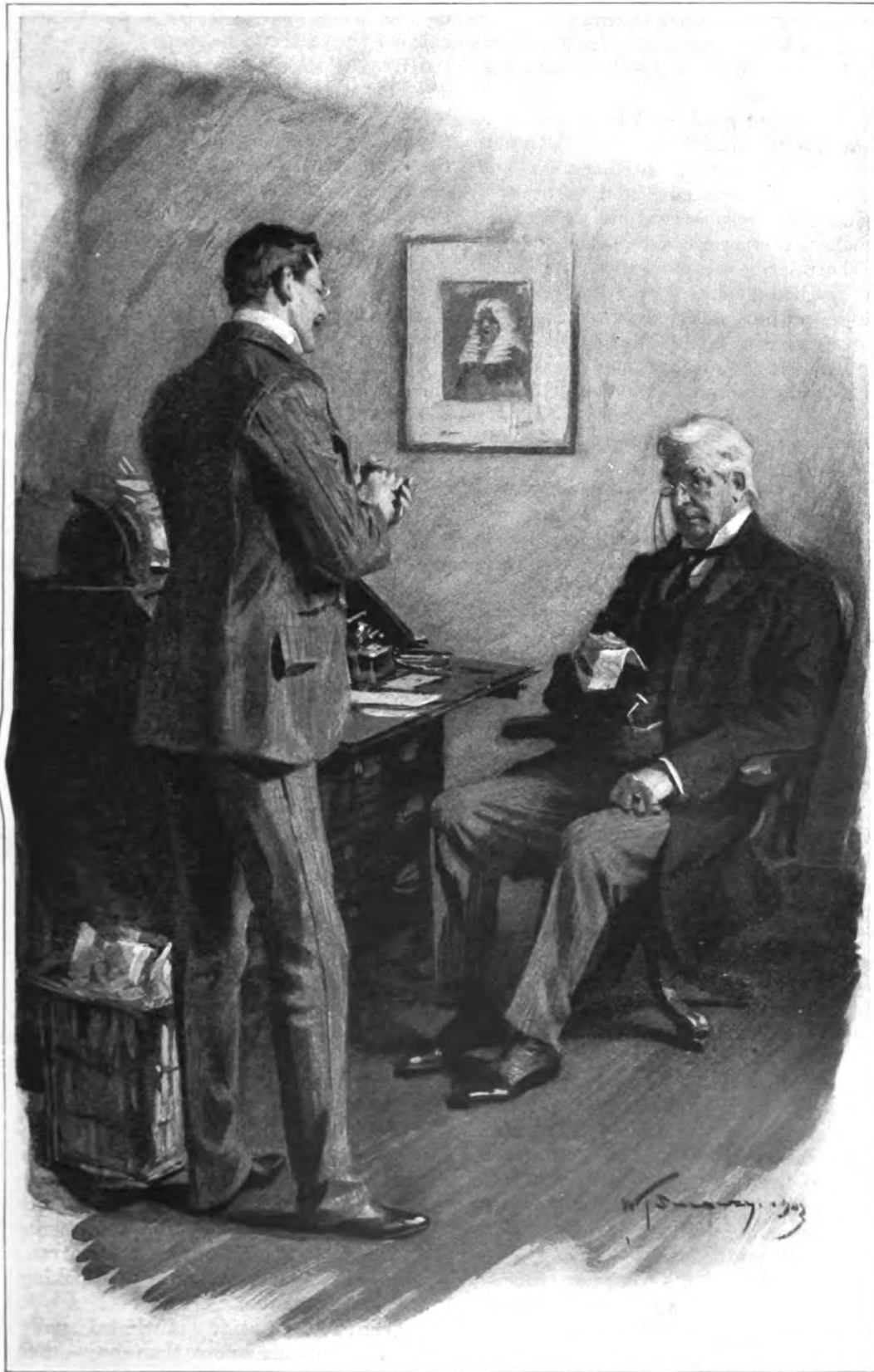
"Please, Mr. Courtney!"

"But I know you do like it. Can you tell me you haven't seen the carte '75 cents with Vin Ordinaire. One dollar with Chianti'? I knew it! Now really—this is my party. All this fuss about one dollar! What's a dollar? Prince Bismarck—"

"No, Mr. Courtney!"

"Oh, very well. I give in. Now, Mr. Prince, if you don't hustle a bit— Yes, vin ordinaire. Here, take away that jar of fragments, if you please. Get me whole bread-sticks, long ones—so long. Ah, that's something like! Now where are your olives? At last we are off. That man's a wonder! I can't speak a word of his jargon, or he of mine, and he always understands. Look at this! I bragged too soon, didn't I? Here's his Whiskers with Chianti, after all! Now you heard me, didn't you, Miss Ireland? No, no! Now it's here, we'll keep it. Maybe my finger slipped on the carte. Your aunt says I smoke too much. Pretty little bottle Chianti comes in. It's half the fun. Do you know, I always feel as if I sat under a nonsense-tree, with these bread-sticks spreading out over my head. You raise your hand, break off a bit of the stick, drop it in your soup—try it! Not table manners, exactly, but then— It's good, isn't it?"

A little awkward himself, Courtney was rattling on, trying by every means in his power to put his guest at ease. They were seated at a little table in the inner room of a small Italian restaurant which Courtney had selected as being a simple, informal place, patronized chiefly by foreigners. Here they could talk as freely as if alone. Under Courtney's boyishness there lurked a certain shrewd caution, and it had been his deliberate intention to keep his relations with his tenants on the most formal basis possible. They paid him rent and cared for the rooms he retained for his own use—and this was connection sufficient. It was, therefore, a sharp departure when, meeting Miss Ireland in the common hallway of the apartment, he had asked her to go out to dine with him, and he saw plainly that she accepted with astonishment and some anxiety, as if she appreciated that a motive must underlie the invitation. It occurred to Courtney, as he now sat op-



Half-tone plate engraved by W. H. Clark

"DESCRIBES HIM TO A HAIR. DOESN'T IT?"

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posite her, that perhaps the formality which he had believed was due to his attitude might be due as well to intention on the other side.

She was not pretty—at least Courtney, whose taste in beauty was a little redundant, had never considered her so. There was too much purpose and earnestness and anxiety in her face, and the lines of her cheek and chin and throat were much too sharp. She was too thin for prettiness. But she had good eyes—pretty, clear, gray eyes,—and fine, pretty, fair hair, and she was a graceful little thing. She broke the bread-stick into her soup as he bade her, tasting it daintily and soberly.

"It is delicious," she agreed. "Do you come here often, Mr. Courtney? What a nice little place it is!"

She glanced up at him diffidently, with an effort to respond to his manner, but an anxious restraint was still in her face, and Courtney felt it kinder and wiser to meet her fears frankly.

"I come here," he said, "when I want to talk. The food's just right for that. Not bad enough to irritate you, and not quite good enough to absorb you. There is a little business matter—nothing to worry you at all—that I wanted to talk over with you, and so I asked you here for the purpose."

She breathed an unconscious, relieved sigh, and leaned back more easily in her chair.

"Then—" She waited inquiringly, and Courtney laughed.

"I thought you were a business woman. That's not the way we do business over a table! That's the way it's done in an office. Really there is no hurry or worry. Don't you want to do this regularly? The programme should be to eat a bit, and drink a bit, and chat a bit. Skirmish around the subject with the fish course, and get down to solid business about with the game. And you haven't admired this room yet. Don't you think that trellis of paper roses between us and the outer *salon* is quaint and gay? They have such pretty, childish tastes—these Italians. And don't you like this little arbor? Those are real rubber-trees, and these hanging things above us are real vines."

He pointed to the row of potted rubber-plants that hemmed in their table, and

to the vines that fell from a narrow balcony above them, meeting the tops of the trees.

"This used to be a private house," he said. "Then it was a studio, which accounts for the balcony and skylight up there, and now they've poked out a kitchen at the back here somewhere. I know that because I've seen some queer things carried through here—in the raw—and worse carried out! There seems to be no back way."

Miss Ireland looked up with sudden interest.

"What is the number of the house?" She looked at the carte. "Why, yes! it's the same. I've made out the rent bills often, and once—" She checked herself, flushing. "I didn't mean to talk shop."

"Go on. And once—"

"I came here to collect the rent—it was overdue. The proprietor was so angry he frightened me."

"But you got the rent?"

"Oh yes."

Courtney looked at her with interest.

"You never stop because you are afraid, do you?" he asked. "That's what I call courage."

She flushed again and laughed aloud.

"Do you? I thought it was courage not to be afraid."

Courtney had never seen her laugh outright before, and he noted with surprise how the change from her usual gravity became her. Her lips when curved were sweet, full, expressive, and there was a possible and poignant charm in her face, which was, as was now evident to him, framed for humor and enjoyment—not for gravity. With happiness and ease surrounding her she might, she would be, almost beautiful. Looking at her through half-closed lashes blurred the too sharp outlines, and— Courtney caught himself up. He had brought Miss Ireland here for a business talk, which might better be opened now, and it seemed to him that he saw his opening. He glanced down at the table appointments about his plate, arranging and rearranging them as he talked, and not looking up at his companion.

"Courage," he said, "is what I really believe affects me more than any other quality. And I think the most courageous man I ever met— Would you like me to

tell you about him? He was one of my first clients. I don't know whether that kind of story interests you. But I think I'll tell it to you. He was held on a serious charge, and it really seemed as if everything was against him—except that he had evidently fallen from something very different, and he was very young. The court assigned me to defend him. He had no money. He made a perfectly clean breast to me—looked me full in the eye, and told me his whole story—except his true name and the names of his partners. But I could not make him do the only thing that would have helped him—plead guilty. The consequence was he got a heavy sentence—fifteen years. He had irritated the court by his stubbornness. I think it appalled him when it came, and on his way from the court-room he escaped, right out of the hands of the officers. He jerked free and plunged down the well of a stairway—the most amazing leap I ever saw taken. Nothing in the world saved his life but sheer courage. If he'd swerved a hair's breadth, if he'd shrunk at all, it would have been the end of him. We stood gaping down the well and watched him pick himself up and run away. And now for his moral courage. The next morning he walked into the court-room and gave himself up! There was no occasion for it. None of us ever understood it. He had escaped and was well hidden somewhere. He seemed to have thought it over and changed his mind, and he walked back into the court-room just as resolutely and stubbornly and pluckily as he had leaped out—to serve fifteen years! I have often thought of that man as the most consistently courageous human being I ever met. He wasn't a good man, but with courage like that a man might make anything of himself. I haven't lost sight of him. He is shortening his term by good conduct. That's a good story, I think; not that I keep it to tell as such—somehow I liked, and in a way I respected, the man too much for that. Whatever else he had done, he was brave, which covers a multitude of sins—for me."

Courtney was still arranging and rearranging the knives and forks on the table, illustrating with them, and seemingly absorbed in their manipulation and

in his narrative, but he knew that Miss Ireland had dropped all pretence of occupation, and was sitting with her intent gray eyes fastened on his face.

Prince Bismarck of the whiskers came hovering about the table, but seeing his approach undesired, quietly withdrew. The outer *salon* was filling rapidly, and those who would wait were welcome to that choice. Courtney went on, still not looking up directly:

"And now that I have the floor, Miss Ireland, I suppose I may as well go on and tell you of that bit of business I wanted to speak to you about. You know Judge Wells, don't you?"

For the first time he lifted his eyes fully to her face.

"Yes, I know Judge Wells," said Miss Ireland.

Her voice was as firm and quiet as were the clear gray eyes that met Courtney's steadily. In neither face nor voice was there the slightest sign of self-betrayal.

"That is, I know him by reputation. But what can he have to do with me, Mr. Courtney?" She paused, then went on, not urgently, but with decision: "It would be easier for me if you would speak plainly. What is it you are trying to say to me?"

"I will be plain," he answered, earnestly. "I never meant to be otherwise in the end. One day not long ago Judge Wells called me to his desk and showed me a package of letters. He said they were all from Mr. Ai and written by the same amanuensis. They were all signed 'Per K.' It was remarkable type-writing, clear, steady, and yet delicate—distinctly the best work of the kind I ever saw. Judge Wells had been so impressed with it that he asked Mr. Ai, when next he saw him, who was 'Per K.' and if he used all of his or her time; and Mr. Ai replied: 'I've been dictating to her for some months, Judge, and now she's dictating to me. I guess I use about all her time.'"

"I am 'Per K,' Mr. Courtney. I never meant to make any mystery of it. Mr. Ai does not like his private affairs talked of—naturally. I never speak of being his confidential stenographer; not because I am in the least ashamed of it—"

Courtney looked up, his blue eyes laughing.

"I was just waiting for that! Will you look at this, please? and don't reply until you have read it carefully."

He drew a paper from his pocket and laid it unfolded on the table before her.

"You have only to sign this—here," he said, "to arrange it all. You haven't any fixed contract with Mr. Ai?"

"No," she answered, briefly, and glancing down at the paper.

Courtney opened his fountain-pen and held it towards her.

"Then you can accept this offer from Judge Wells. It is a purely business proposition. He has taken a fancy to your work, and is willing to pay for his whim. Not that your work isn't worth it. I wouldn't have offered you less than he states here. The contract is for a year, you see, and the Judge is a prince to serve. Only, he wouldn't allow you to work for any one else. You see that's stipulated."

"His terms are princely," she said, slowly.

She sat looking down at the contract, wistfully, as Courtney thought, then pushed it from her, with a motion as if she were about to rise.

"You have been very kind," she said; "both of you have been very kind. Won't you tell Judge Wells for me how much I thank him? I know exactly what you and what a man like Judge Wells must think of Mr. Ai. But you don't either of you know him! You don't understand him or me. We don't belong in your world—your class. I am a working-woman now—whatever I may have been. And I know perfectly how to take care of myself, and just what risks I may run. A woman differently brought up, your sister perhaps, couldn't safely do what I can. As for Mr. Ai— But there is no use in my trying to explain him to you. I know his faults, but I am as safe in his office, working for him, as I would be with my own father. Nothing could persuade me to leave him. He has done for me— Oh, you don't know! I owe him everything, in kindness, in good faith. And I trust him. You don't know anything about it!"

Courtney bent forward towards her, his voice lowered.

"I know all about it! He has led you to believe he has influence with Governor

Worden, and that he can help you in your efforts to gain your brother's pardon. See this—this is what told me the whole story. You dropped it on the floor of my study—your brother's letter. I was his lawyer. It was his story I told you to-night—you recognized it. Judge Wells and I have talked it all over. He knows the Governor—intimately. He will undertake to bring up the case before him. His mere taking it up means much. He is not the man to present a case he is not fairly sure of succeeding with. All depends, of course, on the impression the Governor receives. Can't you see you would only hurt your brother's cause by such an advocate as Mr. Ai? Governor Worden would never yield—he could not—to pressure from such a quarter.—No, my boy. No, I don't want a paper. Not to-night."

But the next moment Courtney was detaining the little newsboy who had ventured to touch the arm of his accustomed patron, offering his wares. He counted out the pennies into the child's hand, asking him laughing questions of his sales, his savings—anything to turn away for the moment. She had asked him to speak plainly, had listened quietly, had seemed steady to bear anything, and then suddenly—the woman in her had conquered! She sat with her face hidden by the hand that supported her drooping head, perfectly motionless except for a breathing like suppressed sobs. Her very self-control alarmed Courtney. What it might lead to he did not know. He was out of his depth—shocked at what he had done, helpless. He dared not speak to her, hardly dared look at her. He dismissed the child and mechanically opened the newspaper he had bought, spreading it out on the table. As he did so one of the headings caught his eye. He looked again—again! then read down the column. The fine lines seemed to rise at him from the page, magnified by his amazement: "A pardon granted to-day by the Governor. . . . No reasons given, save the prisoner's good conduct." Then a brief summary of the case and the prisoner's name. His client's!

Courtney looked up. Bad news he knew she would meet bravely. How might she receive this, for which she had so long struggled and waited? She was

still sitting with her face half hidden, but he could see the line of her thin cheek, the sensitive, trembling lips, the slender, graceful hand. She was so slight, so young, so alone save for those who depended on her, so burdened, so defenceless, and—yes—beautiful; with the subtle beauty of grace, of sensitive refinement, that doubly unfitted her for the life she led. Ai had not deceived her; he had fulfilled his promise. He had gained the pardon! But how had he done this? And for what reason? The color rushed suddenly to Courtney's face. His blood ran hot, protesting, in his veins. A quick fear of the man and of his unsuspected powers sickened him. He half rose from his chair. What he meant to do, to say, he hardly knew. Of one thing only he was sure—into this trap she should not walk unwarned.

"Miss Ireland—"

Her hand dropped at his voice, and she looked up at him—then swiftly past him, over his shoulder. He saw her start, saw her eyes set, then widen as with a sudden terror.

"Look!" she cried, sharply. "Oh, Mr. Courtney, look!"

And before Courtney could turn, from the room behind came that sharp cry which bears its own strange message of human fear and excitement in the very sound of the word—*fire*. Courtney had once seen a fire-stampede of frightened Italian laborers, and with that undying remembrance flashing through his brain he sprang to his feet. The corner where they sat was sheltered from the crowded room by the rubber-trees and hanging vines—a frail screen! He thrust back the table close against the wall and caught Miss Ireland's arm, forcing her to her feet. Before the crash of falling chairs, of wild outcries, broke the momentary hush of terror, he had leaped upon the table, dragging Miss Ireland to his side. He held her fast, hiding her face against his shoulder.

"Don't look!" he cried. "Don't look!"

Then he turned, facing the room.

"Let him alone. I've been all over him. He's all right. He took an ugly crack on the head when that table turned over, and I guess those swine walked on him some. I pulled him out from under some

ten dagoes. Just keep on swabbing his head there, Kitty. That's right. I tell you we had a narrow squeak! Fire department poked its nozzle in just in time! One minute there I thought we were all going to pot. Mighty little harm done, after all. Cause? Oh, anything might have caused it. The place was just fixed for a fire—all that grease and paper. We slipped in nicely up here, and we'll get off the same way. Would make a good story, wouldn't it? Rescued his little typewriter! Hey, Miss Ireland? But I guess the quieter I keep the better—this time. That fire was my fault; at least the panic was. I own that property. There ought to have been a back way out long ago. Will be now! I was there to-night seeing my tenant about it. What's that, Kitty? Coming to? So he is. Lie still there, youngster! You're in the hands of your friends. Lie still! Keep your eyes shut!"

Courtney obeyed, ceasing to struggle physically. Mentally the sharp, exhausting effort to rouse himself, to be alive again, would go on, conquered now and then by waves of weakness that swept him back into dim places where all was confusion, and where only this deep, penetrating, heavy voice, curiously familiar, reached his consciousness—rousing, quieting, controlling him. In a way he felt himself clinging to it, listening for it. And finally he remembered. The whole scene rose before him. They were standing on the table; he was holding Miss Ireland in his arms, her face hidden on his shoulder—the only outlet to the room a blazing mass of tissue-paper roses, of flimsy lace curtains, of fine dry woodwork. And then—the voice! Hoarse, magnetic, powerful, a voice to follow, to obey; it bellowed above the uproar, exhorting, cursing, compelling. Only his charge kept Courtney from the leader's side. His blood was tingling with inaction. He stood peering through the heavy smoke, shielding her from sights and sounds, from the stifling air. The higher air under the balcony was suffocating, but, while she could breathe at all, less dangerous than the crowded floor below.

The voice was at his knee, close by him, strained, choked, whispering.

"A door out—to the roof—up—on the

balcony. Make her climb—on your shoulders—up! I've got the table. Good! Ah! You cattle! Stand back, there! The women first— You won't? Take that! Take that! Look out! the table's over!"

Then darkness. And now again—the voice: "Keep him still. I'll go for a carriage. We'll slip off quietly by a back street. What were you doing out to-night, anyhow, Kitty? I've been at your rooms looking for you. Haven't you seen the evening paper?"

Courtney sat suddenly upright and opened his eyes on a large bare room—an upper storeroom evidently. Miss Ireland's face, white and anxious, was bending over him, and back of her, looking down interestedly over her shoulder—No! Yes! Yes, there was not a shadow of doubt. Huge, coarse, powerful of frame, thick-lipped, with heavy, beetled brows over full, crafty eyes—Ai. He leaned nearer to lay a heavy hand like kindly iron on Courtney's shoulder.

"We-e-ell," he said, throatily, maternally. "Feel better, son?"

And with the tone, the words, the touch, Courtney stepped into his valley of humiliation. Something within him rose to meet the contact. He liked it!

"Good morning, Mr. Courtney. Have you seen the morning paper?"

"I saw it in the evening paper, sir. I suppose we mean the same thing—my client's pardon. I came in to tell you that I dined with Miss Ireland last night, as I told you I would, and I read the news at the table. There is no hope, sir, not the least, of engaging Miss Ireland's services for you. She will stay on with Mr. Ai—for the present certainly."

Judge Wells made no further reply than by settling his glasses on his nose and looking through them at Courtney with an expression of mild amazement, which Courtney answered in words, his manner constrained, awkward, ill at ease.

"No, sir, it's not a question of gratitude. I suppose that's what you mean. She stays on working for Mr. Ai purely because she is not willing to leave him. There has been a rather curious coincidence. Mr. Ai had nothing to do with the pardon for Miss Ireland's brother. He had not yet spoken to the Governor

concerning him. He has been waiting for a fair chance to bring the matter up, but he says the Governor is not very accessible to him."

Judge Wells drew the morning's paper towards him, glancing over it.

"Oh yes! I remember now. 'No reasons given, save the prisoner's good conduct.' Well— I'm—um—"

"No, sir. You are wrong. Mr. Ai had nothing to do with it."

Judge Wells bowed his grave acquiescence, and Courtney flushed under the implied sarcasm. He moved to the window looking out into the street, his back to the room, where Judge Wells's laughing voice followed him:

"Mr. Courtney, I ask your pardon. The Court may have allowed itself to be a little too humorously reminded of 'though he slay me, yet will I believe in him.' Knowing your sentiment concerning our Governor, the Court should have restrained itself. On the face of things it does look a little— Well, you must admit it wouldn't have appeared so well in print, would it? The reform Governor personally obliging Mr. Ai?"

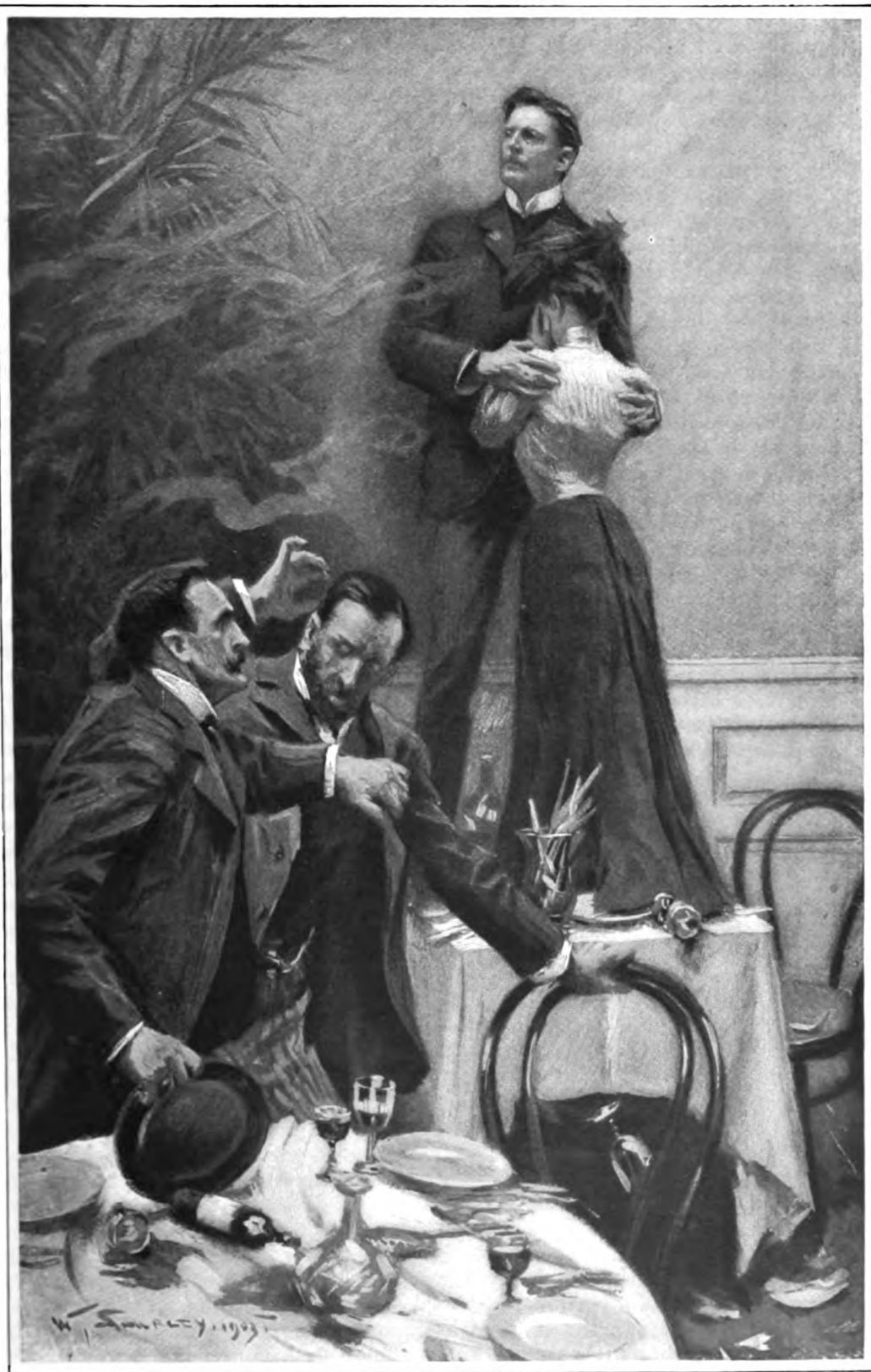
"It's not a question of the Governor this time, sir. Mr. Ai is my informant. He thinks it was, as the papers state, a simple question of the prisoner's good conduct."

This time the Judge laughed outright—irresistibly. Courtney turned sharply, his face crimson.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Courtney," entreated the Judge again.

"I don't blame you, sir," interrupted Courtney. "It sounds ridiculous—from me. And there's worse to come. I—the fact is, sir,—I hardly know how to tell you." With an effort he walked up to the desk and stood facing the Judge, who looked up at him in surprise, seeing then for the first time the dark lines under his favorite's blue eyes, the drawn look on his features, as one who had been under some heavy strain. The Judge's face grew serious. He waited gravely.

"The fact is, sir,—I've met Mr. Ai, and—I like him. I can't explain it all to you; there are reasons why I can't. I don't believe in him—not in all of him—any more than I did yesterday, and I wouldn't trust him with a dime of yours or mine outside of that door, and I



"DON'T LOOK!" HE CRIED. "DON'T LOOK!"

wouldn't believe a word he said to either of us. He'd lie to you or to me in a moment, or to anybody like us. It's up to him to do that—as he'd view it. But he wouldn't lie to Miss Ireland, not for any consideration. When he told her, in my presence, that he had nothing to do with her brother's pardon, he had not. I'd stake my life on it. She didn't know her brother was free until he told her. I should have tried to break it to her gently. He didn't break it to her. He told her at once and outright; but he understood her perfectly. He knew just how to do it. He was *beautiful* with her—I can't use any other word. He does call her 'Kitty'—but it's all right. He's a coarse brute, a dangerous man in lots of ways, but so far as she is concerned, so far as a number of other things about him are concerned, I was all wrong. Miss Ireland ought not to stay on in his office, for the name of it, but, as a matter of fact, she is as safe with him as she could be in your own office. I don't know what you will say to all this, sir. I don't quite know what I think of it myself. I only know I'm right—that's all."

Judge Wells had sat listening silently, looking up into Courtney's face, his keen eyes at their keenest, his shrewd old face concentrating as it would on the bench

when he was following a complicated case to its unravelling. He leaned forward deliberately as Courtney ended, and plucked out Governor Worden's letter from the pigeonhole of his desk.

"Yesterday morning, Mr. Courtney," he said, slowly, "I had almost decided that the man Governor Worden is asking me for in this letter was not yet born into my small horizon. I was about to write accordingly to the Governor. To-day—" he paused, looking up again at the tired blue eyes, the older, sharpened features of the young man in whose gay, light-hearted fascination he had delighted. In his unwithered old heart he found a lingering question, a sensitive regret. And yet—the shrewd old brain asserted itself—the boy must become the man, the man must know men, he must play the game, and, playing, take his risk. He held out the Governor's letter to Courtney.

"I wish you would read this over, Mr. Courtney. The opportunity is one I should have welcomed at your age. There is no money in it, but I have never observed that obliging an Executive was an ultimate loss. I believe you are competent to handle this matter, and exactly as the Governor would wish it handled. It is your job if you care to take it, and I advise you to do so."

Fragment

BY MARGARET HORTON POTTER

THE melancholy morn is here again.
 I see her, bending ghostlike over me,
 For in her arms she bears my waking woe. . . .
 There stands she—with the light of cruel day
 Glittering in her eyes. There waits she, till,
 In sullen agony I lift myself
 And stoop, and let her fasten the great load
 Back in the old, bruised place.
 Ah!—It is there!—"Now straighten up, thou dog,
 And smile, and hurry forth to praise great God
 And greet the day!—Nor dare to let the misery
 Swelling within thee break its bonds and leap
 Up from thy tortured heart and find thy lips,
 In deep-relieving moan.
 Nay, bear it all in silence, smiling,—save
 As thou canst praise thy God."