

The Woman.

[Continued from page 6, Col. 4.]
is betraying the people, then I must fight that party. And I'm going to. Understand me clearly. I'm going to. And the heavy slow voice held no note of threat, nor did it show the faintest tinge of excitement. To Tom Blake, the conversation's non-combatant, the insurgent's rather turgid words carried far stronger message for this very absence of emotion. But they served merely to strip from Mark Robertson his last shreds of diplomatic armor.



"Hasn't He Put Your People Into the Way of Grabbing Millions?"

will be as mere child's play compared to what I'll do as soon as I'm in the speaker's chair.
"The speaker's chair!" roared Mark, diplomacy, caution and even a cool fighting knowledge thrown to the four winds. "The speaker's chair! You'll never sit in it! Never in ten thousand years. Not if I have to—"

CHAPTER V.

Jim Blake.

The man whose advent in the Keswick corridor caused more attention among the loungers than would the arrival of a stage beauty, had at first glance little about him to justify such interest. He was long rather than tall, thin with a wiry compactness, and of a pleasant non-committal face. His age might have been fifty. But a closer glance at his half-shut eyes always gave an odd impression that they were fully a thousand years old. Perhaps this was why Jim Blake seldom opened them wide.

"Hello, boys," repeated Jim Blake, glancing genially and inexpressively from one to the other, from beneath his hanging lids. "Seemed to me I smelt something burning. How are you, Standish? What's up, Tom?"

"Why," answered Tom vaguely embarrassed, "nothing very much. Just a little political discussion."

"So I gathered," yawned Blake. "Mark, you seemed to have been supplying the fireworks for it. I don't suppose it occurred to you that the whole surrounding landscape is fairly crawling with reporters? Nice little story for the morning papers, hey? 'High Words Between Speakership Aspirants in Keswick Lobby.' And a half column more of what you both would have said if you'd said what the reporters thought maybe you might have said. Fine business. Especially at this time."

"He called me—" burst forth Mark. "And you showed your hand?" hazarded Blake. "Good poker, Mark. But punk politics. Mark, I'm afraid we're keeping Mr. Standish from his dinner."

"Good night," replied Standish, taking the broad hint with no show of feeling.

"Good night—till the house meets at ten o'clock," said Blake. "I suppose you'll lead your gallant insurgent cohorts in person this evening?"

"Yes."

"Don't want to call it off and come into the fold again, I s'pose?" suggested Blake quizzically.

"No, thanks," smiled the insurgent, and passed on toward the dining room. "Hello, Van Dyke!" called Blake as the lawyer, with Nelligan and Gregg in tow, came along the corridor toward them, from the bar. "What brings you to Washington? What's up?"

"That's what I'm trying to find out," answered Van Dyke, shaking hands with Blake and instinctively leading the way to the adjacent amen corner.

"What is up? You're supposed to be managing this fight, Jim. And here we find ourselves in the very worst hole we've been in since ninety-seven. If you and I hadn't fought shoulder to shoulder for years and years, I'd be tempted to say you were lying down."

"The crowd down on Broadway," answered Blake, "have handed us a raw proposition in this Mullins bill. The bill smells so rank that even the dear, dear public have got a whiff of it. And when the public gets its sense of smell into good working order—Oh, what's the use, Van Dyke? You can see what we're up against. You know the temper of the country. We can't even defend that bill of yours. And this is no time to put over such a raw one. It's like—"

"Still," argued Van Dyke, "you said you'd be able to put the deal through. And there's surely enough in it for us all."

"I said I could put it through. And I could—when we started. But Standish wasn't fighting it then. This isn't the Bill versus the People. It's Mat Standish versus the Organization. And Standish has the people—the waked-up people—behind him. He's their idol. He's the parson's pet. They look on him as the Worthy Young Man who isn't wicked enough to try. In other words, he's never been found out. There's only two classes of men that I ever met—the sort that have been found out and the sort that haven't. If we can damage Standish in the eyes of the people—if we can make the clergy repudiate him—"

"That's just the point," cried Van Dyke. "Why haven't you been able to do that, instead of sitting peacefully to one side and waiting for him to wreck himself?"

"We've had detectives on him," put in Nelligan. "I told you all that, Van Dyke."

"Detectives?" snorted the lawyer. "What good is that? Your detectives will charge you seven dollars a day and expenses—mostly expenses—for giving you a full report of the way Standish spends the day and what he smokes and the addresses of some of the letters he writes. You'll never get Standish that way. If ever he's broken a law—and most men have—"

[Continued next week.]

Russian Peasants Farm State Land.

In the Petersburg district of Russia scientific agriculture is practically unknown, declares a writer in Country Life. The summer is too short to allow of the successful raising of crops, and tillage is confined to the lands belonging to the village communities. In Russia practically every village is state owned—that is, under the control of no landlord, and every village has within its bounds a certain acreage of common land. The inhabitants of the village have each one a fixed amount of this land assigned to them; but, to avoid favoritism, a peasant does not farm the same strip two seasons running, but a rotation is practiced whereby each member of the village in time goes over the whole land of the community. The birth of a son is a source of great joy on the part of a Russian peasant, for on such an occasion an extra grant of land is given to him. In the north of Russia wheat is never grown. Oats are produced, but rye is the staple crop, and it is from this cereal that the peasant makes his bread.

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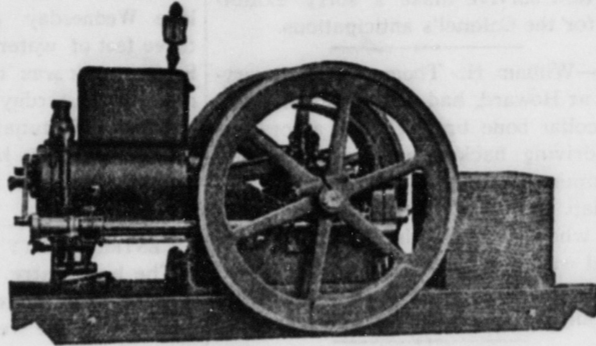
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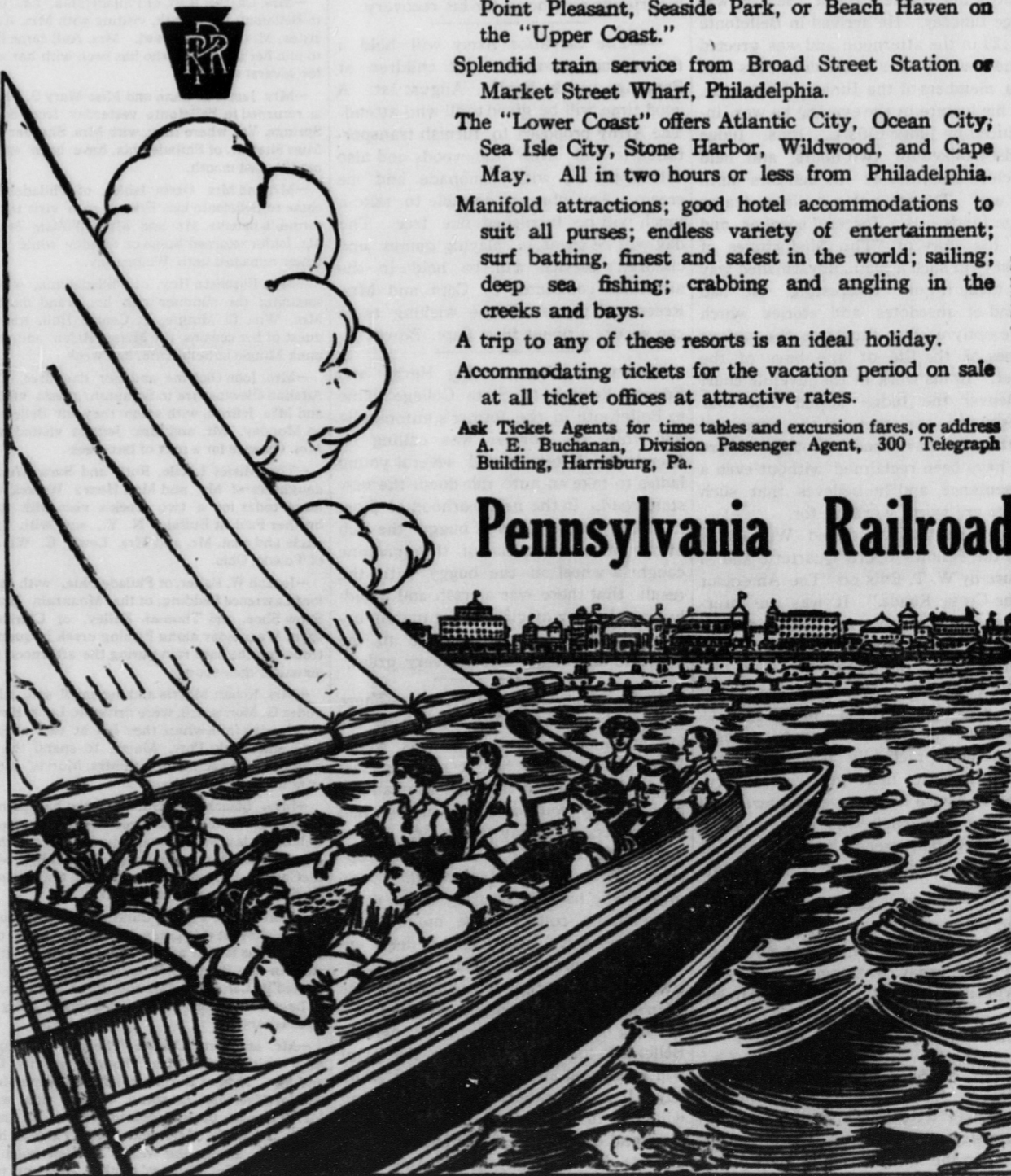
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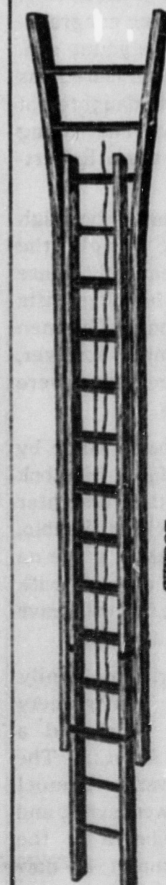
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