

NOBODY'S MAN:—By E. Phillips Oppenheim

THIS BEGINS THE STORY

André Tallente, political leader, has married for money. His wife accepted him for his social ambitions. In losing his seat in Parliament he meets her recriminations with the statement that their marriage has been a success. He is a selfish and selfish man, going to her cold and selfish treatment and her interest in his young secretary, Anthony Palliser, who has just disappeared. She has a sudden suspicion that her husband is responsible for the disappearance. Lady Jane Darlington, a beautiful and wealthy aristocrat interested in labor problems, is a neighbor who he and his wife have parted. André has missed some valuable political papers, and in an argument he is struck by the edge of a cliff with Palliser on the edge of a cliff. He is not under observation by Inspector Gillian, of the police. Stephen Darterey, the great Labor Party leader, with Nora Miall, a charming and brilliant feminist leader, visits Tallente and asks him to join their party.



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AND HERE IT CONTINUES

THERE is so much of truth in what you say," Tallente declared, "that I am going to speak to you frankly, even though my frankness seems brutal. I am going to speak about your friend Miller here. Throughout the war Miller was a socialist. He was dead against killing Germans. He was all for a peace at any price. Miller interrupted, suddenly sitting up in his chair. "Look here, Tallente—" "Be quiet until I have finished," Tallente went on. "He was concerned in no end of intrigue with the German Government and bringing the war to an end. I should say that but for the fact that our Government at the time was wholly one of compromise, and was leaning largely upon the Labor vote, he would have been impeached for high treason." Miller, who had been busy rolling a cigarette, lit it with ostentatious carelessness. "And what of all this?" he demanded. "Nothing," Tallente replied, "except that you now associated with a party who threaten me openly with political extinction unless I choose to join them. I call this junkerdom, not socialism." "No man's principles are stable in an unstable world," Miller pronounced. "I still detest free and compulsory every sort, but I recognize its necessity in your present civil life. I am more than I did in a war which was, after all, a war of politicians." "Nora Miall leaned over from her chair and laid her hand on Tallente's arm. After Miller's rambling tones, her voice sounded almost like music. "Mr. Tallente," she said, "I can understand your feeling aggrieved. You are not a man whom it is easy to threaten, but remember that after all we must go on our feet toward the appointed goal. And—consider— isn't the upraised rod for your good? Your place is with us—indeed it is. I fancy that Stephen here thinks that you are not yet fully acquainted with our real principles and aims. A political party cannot be judged from the platform. The views expressed there have to be largely covered by the character of the audience. It is to the textbooks of our creed, Darterey's textbooks, that you should turn." "I have read your views on certain social matters, Miss Miall," Tallente observed, turning toward her. She laughed understandingly. Her eyes twinkled as she looked at him. "Am I thoroughly disapproved of them, of course? But you know, Mr. Tallente, we are out not to reconstruct society but to lay the stepping stones for a reconstruction. That is all, I suppose, that any single gentleman could accomplish. The views which I have advocated in the Universal Review are the views which will be accepted as a matter of course in fifty years' time. Today they seem to be almost universal, chiefly because the casual reader, especially the British reader, dwells so much upon external effects and thinks so little of the soul that is below." "Even you, Mr. Tallente, with your passion for order and your distrust of all change in established things, can scarcely consider our marriage laws an entire success." Tallente winced a little and Darterey hastily intervened. "We want you to remember this," he said. "The principles which we advocate are concerned before they are considered by men of inherited principles and academic education such as yourself, because you have associated them always with the disciplines of democracy, bolshevism and other discards. You have never stooped to separate the good from the bad. The person who dares to tamper with the laws of King Alfred stands before you prejudged. Granted that our doctrines are extreme, are we—let me be personal and say so—I—the class of men whom you have associated with these doctrines? We Democrats have gained great power during the last ten years. We have thrust our influence deep into the hearts of those great, sinister armies, the trades unions. There is no one except ourselves who realizes our numerical and potential strength. We could have created a revolution in this country at any time since the Premier's first gloomy speech in the House of Commons after the signing of peace, had we chosen. I can assure you that we haven't the least fear of doing so through the streets with red flags and letting loose the diseased end of our rampaging upon the palaces and public buildings of London. We are Democrats or Republicans, whichever you choose to call us, who desire to conquer with the brain, as we shall continue, and whom you have recognized as a man of genius like yourself, who must be for us or against us, if we cannot convert him then we must see that politically he ceases to count." Robert came out and whispered in his master's ear. Tallente turned to his guests. "I cannot offer you dinner," he said, "but my servant assures me that he can provide a cold buffet. Will you stay? I think that you, Darterey, would enjoy the view from some of my bookshelves." "I accept your invitation," Darterey replied eagerly. "I have been sitting here, longing for the chance to watch the sunset from behind your wood." "It will be delightful," Nora murmured. "I want to go down to the grass pier." Miller, too, accepted, a little ungraciously. The little party wandered off down the path which led to the seashore. Miller detained his host for a moment at one of the corners. "By the way, Tallente," he asked, "what about the disappearance of Palliser?" "He has disappeared," Tallente answered calmly. "That is all I know about it." Miller stood with his hands in his pockets, gnawing the end of his moustache, gnawing covertly at the man who stood waiting for him to pass on. Tallente's face was immovable.

developed. There is a new Little Englander abroad and he speaks with the voice of labor. It is our task to find the soul of the people. And I have come to you for your aid." Tallente looked for a moment down to the bay and listened to the sound of the incoming tide breaking upon the rocks. Dimmer now, but even more majestic in the twilight, the great, immovable cliffs towered up to the sky. An owl floated up from the grove of trees beneath and with a strange cry circled round for a moment to drop onto the lawn, a shapeless, solemn mass of feathers. At the back of the hills a little rim of gold, no wider than a wedding ring, announced the rising of the moon. He felt a touch upon his sleeve and a very sweet persuasive voice in his ear. "I heard Mr. Darterey's last words," she said. "Can you refuse such an appeal in such a spot? You turn away to think, turn to the quietness of all these dreaming voices. Believe me, if there is a soul beneath them, it is the same soul which has inspired our creed. You yourself have come here full of bitterness, Andrew Tallente, because it seemed to you that there was no place for you among the prophets of democracy. It was you yourself, in a moment of passion, perhaps, who said that democracy, as typified in existing political parties, was soulless. You were right. Hasn't Mr. Darterey just told you so and doesn't that make our task the clearer? It brings before us those wonderful days written about in the Old Testament—the people must be led into the light." Her voice had become almost part of the music of the evening. She was looking up at him, her beautiful eyes aglow. Darterey, a yard or two off, his thoughtful face paler than ever in the faint light, was listening with joyous approval. In the background, Miller, with his hands in his pockets, was smoking mechanically the cigarette which he had just rolled and lit. The thrill of a great moment brought to Tallente a feeling of almost strange exaltation. "I am your man, Darterey," he promised. "I will do what I can." To be continued tomorrow Copyright, 1922, Bell Syndicate, Inc.

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