

# NOBODY'S MAN:—By E. Phillips Oppenheim

**WHO'S WHO IN THE STORY**  
**ANDREW TALLENTE**—brilliant statesman, approaching middle age, but still young in spirit. Disinterested in Parliament, he becomes interested in a new political party, aiming at cooperation of capital and labor for the public welfare, and is its choice for President.  
**MRS. TALLENTE**—who has married Andrew to forward social ambitions, trading her great wealth for his political prestige. Furious at his declining a peerage, she plots with her secretary, Constance, in whom she has a sentimental interest.  
**ANTHONY MILLER**—who has stolen valuable political news from Andrew, and who, after a quarrel, has mysteriously disappeared.  
**MADY JANE PARTINGTON**—Andrew's nearest neighbor, who stirs his interest greatly after his separation from his political wife. Though the daughter of a Duke, she is somewhat eccentric, conceals her taste on such principles. She is in love with Andrew.  
**STEPHAN DARTREY**—the great Labor-Liberal chief, a statesman, but without ability as a party leader, in love with Dartyrey.  
**NORA MILLER**—a fascinating young feminist and radical, in love with Dartyrey.  
**MILLER**—a coarse-grained radical.



The few lines seemed like a message of hope.

**CHAPTER VI**  
**TALLENTE**, for the first time in his life, was dining a few evenings later at Dartyrey's house in Chelsea, and he looked forward with some curiosity to this opportunity of studying his chief under different auspices. Dartyrey, notwithstanding the fact that he was a miracle of punctuality and devotion to duty, both at the offices in Parliament street and at the House of Commons, to have the gift of fading absolutely out of sight from the ken of even his closest friends when the task of the day was accomplished. He excused himself always, and finally, from accepting anything whatever in the way of social entertainment. He belonged to no clubs, and, if pressed, he frankly confessed a predilection which amounted almost to passion for solitude during those hours not actually devoted to official duties. The invitation to Dartyrey with some surprise, had been given into the habit of looking upon Dartyrey as a man who had no real existence outside the routine of his daily work. He welcomed with aridity, therefore, this opportunity of standing a little more thoroughly Dartyrey's pleasant but elusive personality.

The house itself, situated in a Chelsea square of some repute, was small and unostentatious, but was painted a spotless white and possessed, even from the outside, an air of quiet and unassuming elegance. A trim maid-servant opened the door and ushered him into a drawing-room of gray and silver, with a little faded blue in the silks of the French chairs. There were a few fine-point engravings upon the walls, a small grand piano in a corner, and a very little furniture, although the little there was French of the best period. There were no flowers and the atmosphere would have been chilly but for the brightly burning fire. Tallente was warmly surprised when Dartyrey's entrance alone indicated the fact that, as was generally supposed, he was free from family ties.

"I am a little afraid," Tallente remarked, as they shook hands. "Admirably punctual," the other replied. "I shall make no apologies to you for my small party. I have asked only Miss Miall and Miller to meet you—just the trio of us who came to lure you out of your Devonshire Paradise."

"Miller?" Tallente repeated, with instant comprehension. "Yes, I was thinking, only the other day, that you scarcely see enough of Miller."

"I see all that I want to," was Tallente's candid comment. "Dartyrey laid his hand upon his guest's shoulder. In his somber dinner garb, with low, turned-down collar and flowing black tie, his gray-black beard cut to a point, his high forehead, his straightly brushed-back hair, which still betrayed its tendency to natural curls, he looked a great deal more like an artist of the dreamy and aesthetic type than a man who had elaborated a new system of life and government."

"It is because of the feeling behind those words, Tallente," he said, "that I have asked you to meet him here to-night. Miller has his objectionable points, but he possesses still a great hold upon certain types of the working-man. I feel that you should appreciate that a little more thoroughly. The politician, as you should know better than I, has no personal feelings."

"The politician is left with very few luxuries," Tallente replied, with a certain grimace. "Nora was announced, brilliant and gracious in a new dinner gown which she frankly confessed had ruined her, and close behind her Miller, a little grumpy in his overlong dress coat and badly arranged white tie. It struck Tallente that he was aware of the object of the meeting and his manner, obviously intended to be ingratiating, had still a touch of self-conscious trepidation."

They went into dinner, a few minutes later, and their host's tact in including Nora in the party was at once apparent. She talked brightly of the small happenings of their day-by-day political life and bridged over the moments of awkwardness before general conversation assumed its normal swing. Dartyrey encouraged Miller to talk and they all listened while he spoke of the mammoth trades unions of the north, where his hold upon the people was greatest. He stated the moral effect of the war, from the moral effect of which he argued, the working man had never wholly recovered. Tallente listened a little grimly.

"The fervor of self-sacrifice and so-called patriotism which some of the proletariat undoubtedly felt at the outbreak of the war," Miller argued, "was only an incidental, a purely passing sensation compared to the idle and greedy inertia which followed it. The war lost," he went on, "might have acted as a lash upon the torpor of many of these men. Won, it created a wave of immorality and extravagance from which they had never recovered."

"They spent more than they had and they earned more than they were worth. That is to say, they lived an unnatural life."

"It is fortunate, then," Tallente remarked, "that the new generation is almost here."

"They, too, carry the taint," Miller insisted.

Tallente looked thoughtfully across toward his host.

"It seems to me that this is a little disheartening," he said. "It is exactly what one might have expected from a shock or even Lethbridge. Miller, who is nearer to the proletariat than any of us, would have us believe that the people who should be the bulwark of the state are not fit for their position."

"I fancy," Dartyrey said soothingly, "that Miller was talking more as philosopher than a practical man."

"I speak according to my experience," the latter insisted, a little doggedly.

"Among your own constituents?" Tallente asked, with a faint smile, reminiscent of a recent unexpected defeat of one of Miller's partisans in a large constituency.

"Among them and others," was the somewhat acid reply. "Sands lost his seat at Tenby-ter through the

pathy of the very class for whom we fight."

Miller gnawed his mustache for a moment.

"Then I was probably unpopular there," he said. "I have to tell the truth. Sometimes people do not like it."

"The dinner was simply but daintily served. There were wines of well-known vintages, and as the meal progressed Dartyrey unbent. Eating scarcely anything and drinking less, the purely intellectual stimulus of conversation seemed to unloose his tongue and give to his pronouncements a more pungent tone. Naturally, politics remained the subject of discussion and Dartyrey disclosed a little the reason for the meeting which he had arranged.

"The craft of politics," he pointed out, "makes but one inexorable demand upon her followers—the demand for unity. The amazing thing is that this is not generally realized. It seems the fashion nowadays, to dissent from everything, to cultivate the ego in its narrowest sense rather than to try to reach out and grasp the hands of those around. The fault, I think, is in an over-developed theatrical sense, the desire which so many clever men have for individual notoriety. We Democrats have prospered because we have been free from it. We have been able to sink our individual prejudices in our cause. That is because our cause has been great enough. We aim so high, we see so clearly, that it is rare indeed to find among us those individual differences which have been the ruin of every political party up to today. We have no Brown who will not serve with Smith, no Robinson who declines to be associated with Jones. We forget the small things which are repugnant to us in a fellow-man, because of the great things which bind us together."

"To a certain extent, yes," Tallente agreed, with some reserve in his tone. "yet we are all human. There are some prejudices which no man can conquer. If he pretends he does, he only lives in an atmosphere of self-hood. The strong man loves or hates."

"You will find that I am not altogether an anchorite," Dartyrey observed, as they settled into their places. "I am a lover of life, especially, Tallente, and bring your chair round to the fire. There are cigars and cigarettes at your elbow, Miller. I think I know your taste. Help yourself."

Miller drank creme de menthe and smoked homemade Virginia cigarettes. Tallente watched him and sighed. Then, suddenly conscious of his host's critical scrutiny, he felt an impulse of shame, felt that his contempt for the man had in it something almost snobbish. He leaned forward and hid his face. Miller had been a school-board teacher, an exhibitor at college, and was possessed of a singular though limited intelligence. He could deal adequately with any one problem presented by itself and affected only by local conditions, yet the more Tallente talked with him, the more he realized his lack of breadth, his curious weakness of judgment when called upon to consider questions dependent upon varying considerations. As to the right or wrong wording of a clause in the Factory Amendment Act, he felt a clear, explanatory and convincing; as to the justice of the same clause when compared with other forms of legislation, he was vague and unconvincing, didactic and prejudiced. If Dartyrey's object had been to bring these two men into closer understanding of each other, he was certainly succeeding. It is doubtful, however, whether the understanding progressed entirely in the fashion he had desired. Nora, curled up in an easy chair, affecting to be sleepy, but still listening earnestly, felt that that intervention was necessary. The self-revelation of Miller under Tallente's surgical questioning was beginning to disturb even their host.

"If an being neglected," she complained. "If no one talks to me, I shall go home."

Tallente rose at once and sat on the lounge by her side. Dartyrey stood on the hearth rug and plunged into an ingenious effort to reconcile various points of difference which had arisen between his two guests. Tallente all the time was politely acquiescent, Miller a little sullen. Like all men with brains acute enough to deal logically with a procession of single problems, he resented because he failed altogether to understand that a wider field of circumstances could possibly alter human vision.

Tallente walked home with Nora. They chose the longer way, by the embankment.

"This is the Cockney's antithesis to the moonlight and bells of your country folk," Nora observed, as she pointed to the yellow lights flashing across the black water.

Tallente drew a long breath of content.

"It's good to be here, anyway. I am glad to be out of that house," he confessed.

"I'm afraid," she sighed, "that our dear host's party was a failure. You and Miller were born in different camps of life. It doesn't seem to me that anything will ever bring you together."

"For this reason," Tallente explained eagerly. "Miller's outlook is narrow and egotistical. He may be a shrewd politician but there isn't a grain of statesmanship in him. He might make an excellent chairman of a parish council. As a Cabinet Minister he would be impossible."

"He will demand office, I am afraid," Nora remarked.

Tallente took off his hat. He was watching the lights from the two great hotels, the red fires from the funnel of a little tug, black and mysterious in the windy darkness.

"I am sick of politics," he declared suddenly. "We are a parcel of fools. One foot moon-day and night to the solemn music."

"You, of all men," she protested, "to be talking like this!"

"I mean it," he insisted, a little doggedly. "I have spent too many of my years on the treadmill. A man was born to be either an egoist and travel out the earth according to his tastes, or to develop like Dartyrey into a dreamer. Curse you!" he added, suddenly shaking his hat at the tall towers of the Houses of Parliament.

things in the world which lie to your hand seem like baubles."

"You are hideously logical," he growled.

"They were walking slower now, within a few yards of the entrance of her flat.

Both of them were a little disturbed—she, full as she was with all the generous impulses of sensuous humanity, intensely awakened, intensely sympathetic.

"Tell me, where in your wife?" she asked.

"In America."

"It is hopeless with her?"

"Utterly and irrevocably hopeless."

"It has been for long?"

"For years."

"And for the sake of your principles," she went on, almost angrily, "your stupid, canonical and dry-the-dust little principles, you've let your life shrivel up."

"I can't help it," he answered. "What would you have me do? Stand in the market place and shout my needs?"

She clung to his arm.

"You dear thing!" she said. "You're a great baby!"

They were in the shadow of the entrance to the flats. He suddenly bent over her; his lips were almost on her eyes, but she made no movement of retreat. Suddenly he drew himself upright.

"That wouldn't help, would it?" he said simply. "Thank you, all the same, Nora. Good-by!"

On his table, when he entered his rooms that night, lay the letter for which he had craved. He opened it almost fiercely. The few lines seemed like a message of hope:

"Don't laugh at me, dear friend, but I am coming to London for a week or two, to my little house in Charles street. I don't know exactly when. Will find time to come and see me?"

"Here the mists seem to have fallen upon us like a shroud, and we can't escape. I grieved many miles this morning, but it was like trying to find the edge of the world."

"Please call on my sister at 17 Mount street. She likes you and wants to see more of you." JANE.

To be continued tomorrow  
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