

HIS RISE TO POWER

By Henry Russell Miller,
Author of
"The Man Higher Up"

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CHAPTER II. The Theorist.

JOHN went to the window, where he watched the politician until the swaggering figure disappeared around the corner. Murchell, with a faint twinge at his heart, saw the distaste plainly written on the young man's face. The twinge was because the time had come to grind his young friend through the mills of the organization. The senator, who set a low value upon gratuitous services, proposed to make the grinding process worth while to the man who was to be ground. He was already forming vague plans of setting him on the road to high political station. Perhaps John might even prove to be an Elisha, some day to assume a fallen mantle.

To the portrait of the state leader already painted we may add that William Murchell was a bachelor, a matter for which he is not to be censured too severely, since he once made an earnest effort to repair the condition. His had been a very simple romance. He had loved, had laid himself and his aspirations at the lady's feet and had been rejected. A short time afterward he stood with his best friend as the latter took the same lady in holy wedlock. It is probable that he had his period of suffering; but, as became a man of ambition, he quickly put an end to it and gave himself to the climb to power. In time his romance was almost forgotten.

Almost, for in later years sometimes in a mellow hour he would construct for himself a scene in which a gentle faced woman with gray-green eyes sat across the hearth and around them an indefinite number of the second generation. In the scene was always a pleasantly laughing young man who peered out on the world through eyes like his mother's. This often occurred after Senator Murchell had met or heard something of John Dunmeade, a young man in whom he thought he saw a masculine replica of the woman of his romance. The senator's memory must have been good, for she had been dead many years. He was seeing her that June afternoon.

John returned to his chair. Murchell looked around at the dingy office. Over the desk hung a calendar and another faded, old fashioned print of Daniel Webster. Save for this adornment the walls were given over to calf and sheep bound books—rows and rows set upon plain pine shelves. The old mahogany furniture, doubtless splendid in its day, had been battered and scratched by many careless hands and feet.

"You keep the old office just the same, I see. I remember when your grandfather built and furnished it."
"Yes; I don't like to disturb things, though Aunt Roberta thinks it's a fearful mess. Three generations of Dunmeades have used this office just as it is."

"I used to come here to borrow books from your grandfather and talk politics. He was a mighty smart man. He would have been governor during the war if he hadn't died. He gave me my start."
"Yes," John said idly. "Senator"—he leaned forward abruptly—"what do you think of Sheehan? Why don't you, with all your power, put men like Sheehan out of politics?"

"Young man," Murchell answered dryly, "if I were strong enough to put all the rascals out of politics I'd make the Almighty jealous. Are you going to take the nomination?"

"I hate to be under obligations to Sheehan."
"You won't be under obligations—to Sheehan."

"I don't want to be under obligations"—John hesitated a moment—"to you. Something might come up that would make me seem ungrateful."

"I'll risk it."
"But I'm not sure I'm the kind of man you want."

"I'll risk it," Murchell repeated.
"But I don't think you understand," John persisted. "I've been—bothered a little lately about some things. That trust company affair, for instance—it doesn't look right. And then Sheehan—I can't quite stomach his power. I don't like to seem to criticize, senator, but it looks to me as though the system that allowed that trust company affair must be wrong somewhere."
"Tut, tut, young man," the senator answered, a trifle testily. "Don't go flying off at a tangent with harebrained theories about perfect systems."

John shook his head in troubled fashion. "I've got to figure that out in my own way, senator."

Murchell looked out of the window into the square thoughtfully. It was a warm, listless day. There was nothing in the peaceful, indolent scene to tell him that the serene waters upon which he had sailed to power were to

become a seething, passion lashed rury whose subsidence he would never see. He knew only that the people, even—end example of the ingratitude of republics!—the people of Benton county, were stirring restlessly, asking question and criticizing answers. But that would pass, as such ebullitions had always passed!

He pointed to the sleepy square. "You won't want to sit here looking out at that all your life, if you're the man I take you for. You'll want to go out and make your place—a big place—in the life of men. If you do you can't stop to hit every ugly head that pops up in your path. And you've got to make use of the materials you find. Leave the things that don't look right alone. They'll work themselves out in the end. They always have. And be impersonal. Make use of enemies and friends alike."

Counsel to Laertes from an expert in life!

"Even your friendship?" John interrupted quickly, smiling.

"You'd be a fool if you didn't," Polonius replied consistently.

"I'm afraid," John sighed—"I'm afraid I'm that kind of fool. I suppose," he went on, "I'm going to take the nomination. I do want to make a place for myself in the big life of men. But I want to earn it, not seize it because I am strong enough or have it given to me by some other who is strong." He hesitated, then continued: "It sounds absurd, I know, but something seems calling, compelling me into this. And I'm—I'm afraid. I have the feeling that I am facing something to which I perhaps may not be equal. Senator Murchell, I ask you to tell me truly, is there any reason why a man who wants to come through clean should not go into politics?"

"Absolutely none," the senator answered promptly. And he added sincerely, with a pertinence the scope of which he did not comprehend, "if there were more clean men in politics there would be less room for the rascals."

So William Murchell, as he thought, bound his young friend, John Dunmeade, to the wheels of his organization.

News travels swiftly and by mysterious avenues in New Chelsea. That evening at supper Judge Dunmeade congratulated his son.

"I am glad," he said ponderously, "that you have entered the service of your party."

Miss Roberta, the judge's sister, sniffed disdainfully. "Does that mean



"You can't stop to hit every ugly head that pops up."

pulling chestnuts out of the coals for Pussycat Murchell? You better keep out of politics, John. There'll be trouble. I feel it in my bones."

"Roberta," chided the judge, "it doesn't lie in a Dunmeade's mouth to speak disparagingly of one who has placed our family under such obligations as has William Murchell."

"Meaning your judgeship, I suppose."
The judge stiffened visibly. "I trust my own character and ability had something to do with that."

"Are you depending on them to make you a justice?" It was an open secret in the Dunmeade family that the judge aspired to end his days on the supreme bench of the state.

He treated the jibe to the silence it deserved, and Miss Roberta, who did not ignore the value of the last word in a tit, triumphantly rose from the table and left the room. Hugh Dunmeade was held by his neighbors and hitherto had been accounted by his son a good man, a just judge and an exemplary citizen. His dicta, judicial and private, carried great weight in the community. And he seemed troubled by no questions of—not having formulated the disturbing doubt, John called it propriety.

"I hope," Judge Dunmeade continued, "you aren't falling into your aunt's habit of looking a gift horse in the mouth."

"Then it—this nomination—will be a gift from Murchell?"

"You couldn't see it otherwise."
"And you have nothing wrong in that?"

"I myself should be glad to have his support for any office I might seek." The judge regarded this answer as sufficient. "I'm glad you have it. It shows his friendship for us continues. And," he cleared his throat significantly, "it augurs well for other hon-

ors to—them—our family."

Two little creases settled between John's eyes.

Miss Roberta was a vigorous spinster of sixty whose caustic tongue tried, not always successfully, to hide the kindly impulses of her heart. She was a lady of many violent dislikes and a few equally violent friendships.

Later in the evening she found John alone on the western porch staring up into the sky. The prophecy of the morning's red sunrise was about to be fulfilled; it was evident that a storm was brewing.

"Steve Hampden," Miss Roberta remarked in a carefully casual tone, "is home. And Katherine," she added, "Yes?" negligently.

"You go and call on her. Go to-night."

"Can't. I have"—he yawned—"an appointment with the sandman. I didn't sleep much last night. Won't she keep?" She seemed healthy enough the last time I saw her. Regular little red headed tomboy, she was."

"She mightn't stay long," Miss Roberta's tone implied that this contingency would be little short of calamitous. "And Warren Blake is dancing after her already."

"Dear Aunt Roberta, Warren never in his life did anything so frivolous as dancing. Why are you in such a hurry to have me fall in love?"

"I don't want you to grow old and crabbed and—lonesome—like me."
"Why—why, Aunt Roberta, I didn't know you felt that way. You musn't, you know," he said gravely, and patted her hand affectionately, from which unwonted demonstration she hastily snatched it away.

He laughed. "There's time enough for mating anyhow. I'm only thirty; and, besides, what could I offer a girl, even if I were so reckless as to fall in love?"

"Yourself," Miss Roberta could not entirely repress a hint of pride.

"Those spectacles you're always losing must be rose colored. I'd want to offer something more than myself, Aunt Roberta—something of achievement that would prove my worth. I couldn't love a woman who could care for a little, futile man. When I've done something, then—"

"I know what you're thinking, Johnny. Don't go into politics."

"I've got to. I don't want to go all my life as I have done, drudging along for a little money, drying up in the routine, my outlook narrowing. I'd have nothing to show in justification of my living. Why, I'd be no better than Warren Blake, Aunt Roberta."

One night, by a stretch of the imagination, have called the sound Miss Roberta emitted a laugh.

Across Main street from the courthouse square—scene of Daniel Webster's famous speech, the war time demonstrations and the annual rally—stands a red brick, white porticoed mansion in the style we distinguish as colonial. This house was built in the early thirties by Thomas Dunmeade, founder of New Chelsea, then in his eightieth year, a period of life when his thoughts should have been centered on heavenly glories, but were, in fact, busied with the cares and vanities of this world.

Thomas lived just long enough to install himself in the new house. Then he died in an apoplectic fit following a choleric denunciation of Andrew Jackson. The title to the house descended to the pioneer's son, Robert, a gentleman of parts, who, as founder of the flour mills, brought commercial consequence and as congressman for one term the honors of statesmanship to the town of his nativity. His son was Hugh, the soldier and later the judge of the house of Dunmeade.

Miss Roberta and John were sitting under a tree in the front yard. It was Sabbath afternoon in New Chelsea.

"I wonder," mused Miss Roberta, "how Steve Hampden liked the sermon?"

"He probably wasn't listening."

"Warren Blake walked home from church with Katherine," she remarked significantly.

"She was there, then?"

"Didn't you see her?"

"I heard the stir when she came in; but, strange to relate, I was more interested in the service, and I forgot to look her up after church."

"Why won't you go to see her?"

John rose with a sigh of resignation. "Aunt Roberta, you are a woman of one idea. I see I shall have no peace of mind until I've paid my respects to this gilded lady. I go!"

He could never repress a smile when he saw the Hampden place. Almost within the span of his memory its evolution—it was always called a "place"—keeping pace with its owner's fortune, had been wrought. The first house on that site had been a five room frame cottage, built just before the war when Stephen Hampden was manager of the Dunmeade mills. It is said that he laid the foundation of his fortune in a certain contract for army horseshoes. In the seventies, being then owner of Plumville's largest iron foundry, he inaugurated the custom of returning to New Chelsea for the hot months. The little cottage was torn down. In its place was reared a red brick house, liberally adorned with turrets and scroll work in the style of that period.

The foundry grew—even outgrew its owner, whose taste, if not his talents, ran to speculation rather than to production. He sold out and went to the Steel city to pursue fortune via the bourse and the real estate market. In these days New Chelsea saw him and his family only semioccasionally. The house with the turrets had attained the dignity of a "country place." Then

New Chelsea heard that Steve Hampden had been admitted into the enviable and exclusive circle of millionaires. With wealth and travel came taste. The "country house" was remodeled. The turrets were razed; wings were added to the house; the iron picket fence was removed and a hedge planted in its stead. Not all the architect's devices could make of the house a thing of beauty, so ivy was planted and trained to enshroud its naked ugliness. A few years with nature, assisted by the English gardener, and the transformation was complete.

But not enough, for New Chelsea knew of another structure in course of erection on the crest of East Ridge, to be the "palatial residence," as the Globe took pleasure in reporting, "of our fellow citizen, Stephen Hampden, who it is hoped will be often in our midst."

CHAPTER III. Sunset.

BUTLER answered John's ring and on inquiry informed him that the ladies of the Hampden family were not at home.

"Will you wait, sir?"
"No," and John turned away. He walked out into the country across the bridge at the confluence of North Branch and South Branch, where rises Grant's Knob. He followed the path that leads, corkcreek fashion, to the crest of the knob, and there, in the thick of the shade of a big walnut, leaning against an old bowlder that had crowned the knob longer than John could remember, sat the object of his quest.

He had an instant to look at her before she observed him, and smilingly he waived himself of it. And very charming, very alluring she was to his eyes in her light summery gown and the big, soft leghorn hat with its flowers and leaves dancing in the breeze. An open book lay in her lap, but she was not reading. Through half closed eyes she was gazing dreamily at the hills that marched away into the blue distance.

He took a step toward her. She heard him and looked up.

"Hello!" he said.

"Good afternoon." Her salutation was very cool indeed.

"Of course if you don't want me to stay—"

"It isn't my bill."

He laughed outright. "Her tactics never vary, it seems," he remarked. "Effective, though. Queer, isn't it, how attractive a girl becomes when she puts on that frigid, speak to me if you dare manner?"

"You were very stupid not to know me the other day."

"But I remembered you!"

"You mean you forgot all about me."

"As an impudent, long legged, freckled tomboy with red hair while you?"

He paused deliberately.

"My hair was never red," she replied coldly.

Suddenly the clouds broke away. She returned to him with a laugh. "Oh, I can't keep it up. But where did you get your courage? You weren't nearly so brave the other morning. I've been here six days. Why haven't you come to see me?" she demanded.

"Well, you see," he began lamely to explain, "I've had a good many important things to think about and—"

"And I was neither important nor interesting. You need practice, I see."

"But you are."

"You really find me interesting? You know, I've worked hard, very hard, to earn the involuntary, generous compliment I am about to receive."

"I do—surprisingly so," he responded promptly.

"You needn't be so surprised," she retorted. "I was always rather presentable in spite of the freckles, only you wouldn't condescend to notice it. You didn't like me."

"But you were such a pesky little nuisance, you know. Let me see," he added reflectively, "that was—yes, it's been ten years since I last saw you. Not counting the other morning, of course."

"No, eight," she corrected him. "You saw me after the big game, the time you saved the day. You walked right by me, looking straight into my eyes, and never recognized me. You were too anxious to reach Adele Whittington and be made a hero of by her. She was as proud as—as I'd have been if I'd had the chance—to exhibit you."

"How is Adele?"

"Oh, she's dreading thirty, is fighting down a tendency to fat, has begun to paint and often asks about you. Are you still in love with her? And am I a cat to talk so about her? And has she had many successors?"

"No to all three questions. She gave me a bad three months, though."

"I'm glad of it," she declared vengefully. "Didn't you know I was terribly in love with you? That's what made me such a pesky little nuisance. Oh, you needn't look so shocked since it was only child love and I have quite recovered. Quite!"

So while the golden afternoon waned they exchanged pleasant nonsense. His spirits rose unaccountably. He was very boyish, very gay. Sometimes they rose to half serious discussion that slipped lightly and audaciously about from peak to peak of human knowledge. She had traveled much with her father, who, it appeared, had "really learned how to travel," having to make the most of his limited leisure. She knew places not starred in Baedeker—quiet, obscure corners of the earth, full of color. John helped out this part of the talk with questions more or less intelligent. She was pleased to commend his interest.

"One could almost believe you had been there. You would enjoy these places, I know. Not every one does. I'd love to visit, not do, them with you."

(Continued in Next Friday's Issue.)

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