HIS RISE TO POWER

By Henry Russell Miller,

Author of
"The Man Higher Up"

SYNOPSIS

Senator Murchell, leader of the state **machine**, and Sheehan, local boss of New **Chelsea**, offer the nomination for district **attorney** to John Dunmeade. Dunmeade **is** independent in his political ideas.

Dunmeade will accept the nomination. **His** father, a partisan judge, congratu**lates** him. His Aunt Roberta urges John **to** call on Katherine Hampden, daughter **of a** capitalist.

Katherine Hampden is a worshiper of **success**. She and John are friends. Jere**my** Applegate, a political dependent, cam**paigns** for John and the state ticket.

In New Chelsea lives Warren Blake, a **model** young bank cashier, connected with **Hampden** in "high finance." They try **without** success for John's aid.

The rottenness of politics in his state **and** party as revealed in his campaign dis**gusts** John. He calls upon Katherine.

Katherine's peril in a runaway reveals to her and John their unspoken olve. John publicly "turns down" the machine of his party.

John will not compromise with his conscience even for the sake of winning Katherine, and the two part.

The course of his son is disapproved by **Judge** Dunmeade. John is elected and **puts** Sheehan on trial for political corrup**tion.**

Sheehan is convicted and flees. John **meets** Haig, a novelist, who is introduced **to** him by Warren Blake.

Haig and John visit the Hampdens. **Blake** proposes to Katherine and is re**jected.** He praises John to her. Murchell **has** a visitor.

The visitor is Sackett, head of the Atlantic railroad, trying to keep the Michigan out of the Steel City. He wants Murchell to retire. The latter cannot induce John to stop his attacks on the machine. John and Katherine meet.

She still thinks John a follower of impossible ideals. He loses in his fight for cleanliness in state politics and falls ill Murchell offers financial aid to the Dunmeades.

John recovers and continues his fight, **aided** by Haig. In the Steel City he meets Katherine, who is courted by Gregg, a financially successful man.

Murchell loses control of the machine to Sherrod and retires nominally from politics. Sherrod gets drunk, and a messenger is sent to Murchell for aid.

Sherrod has embezzled $900,000 of state money. Murchell resumes control after aiding his foe to conceal the crime and make restitution.

John thought rapidly. In the beginning of his crusade he would have enforced the law rigorously and mercilessly, believing that in punishment lay healing virtue for the state. Now he had learned its futility, and the broken man in front of him had already been punished enough. Surely he could show so much leniency and harm no one.

"I'll do that much for you gladly," he said. "And if you need any legal help in straightening out your affairs I'll be glad to help you."

Sheehan suddenly sat bolt upright, the red rushing to his sallow face. "It's that sanctimonious Blake," he said angrily. "He's gettin' after me because they think I'm afraid to come back. Dirty crook! The bank's tryin' to collect some old notes of mine that wasn't supposed to be paid."

"Not to be paid? Why?"

"Political notes. Look here!" Sheehan's face lighted up in a slow, cunning smile that boded no good for Warren Blake. "Do you want to make a big play?"

John, too, sat up, suddenly alert. "Just what do you mean?"

"Have you been percolatin' around in politics for six years an' not known about the Farmers'? There's always a few easy banks for the politicians. They get state deposits. See? An' then dish them out to the politicians on notes. Sometimes the notes are paid, an' sometimes they're just carried along. My notes wasn't to be paid because I helped get the Farmers' its deposits. It used to be one of the easy banks. An' I guess it is still. Else why is a bank that's friendly to Murchell carryin' deposits under Sherrod? I guess they must be gettin' pretty shaky, because I ain't the only one they're after. I've been skirmishin' around here, seein' some men I used to know, an' they tell me Blake's pushin' a good many old notes hard."

"But Hampden and Blake, with their stock, wouldn't let"—

"Stock! I bet they haven't ten shares apiece. If you want to find that stock you've got to look in the tin boxes of the farmers or in the estates of the widows an' orphans."

"But their last report was fine."

"That's easy. You just carry the notes as assets. Assets!"

"See here, Sheehan!" John was stern. "Have you anything but suspicion for this?"

"Ain't suspicion, the kind I've got, enough? You go after 'em an' show 'em up. I bet you'll find 'em rotten. Those easy banks always do bust up sooner or later. I s'pose I've got to pay. I've got property an', if they sue, I can't make any defense. But," he concluded vengefully, "somebody else nas got to pay too."

"Sheehan," John said coldly, rising, "you're letting your desire to get even get away with your common sense. I'll not destroy confidence in a bank, ruin it, by going after it on mere suspicion. As for yourself," he added, more kindly, "if you report at my office next Saturday morning with new bail I'll go before the court and ask that execution of your sentence be postponed until your affairs are easier." With that he left.

Only a few days remained before the primaries. During the two terms of office John had acquitted himself with skill and fidelity. Fear of him had doubtless restrained the machine from many characteristic depredations, but victory was well nigh hopeless. He had become a candidate again only that the fight might go on, in the faint hope that something might occur to turn the tide in his favor. In the absence of the unforeseen he would carry the townships by a slight majority, but New Chelsea and Plumville would go strongly against him. The little city had grown remarkably in population and importance. John was an old story in which it had lost interest. It got the impression that in turning deaf ears to his plea it was righteously squelching a shallow, impudent, self seeking upstart.

Even among the farmers John met with the unresponsiveness of discouragement. They would vote for him, most of them, but it would be perfunctorily, hopelessly. They were disappointed. The reform that had begun so auspiciously six years before was ending in dismal failure, with no other fruit than to evolve a new and stronger machine.

Well it was for John's melting trust in himself and his fellows that he could meet an occasional Cranshawe or Sykes or Criswell. Their faith survived. He met the trio, the night before the primaries, at Cranshawe's home on the pike. They did not pretend a vain optimism; they knew that they faced defeat.

"At any rate," remarked Criswell, at the close of the discussion, "ye've had six years of good fightin'."

"I guess," said Cranshawe kindly, "ye think it hasn't paid. In one way mebby it hasn't. An' then again in another it has. It's like what I once told ye. Ye've showed us the way. If we hain't follered, it's our own lookout. Ye've done your part."

"Ye have," agreed Sykes solemnly.

And when he left all three made a point of shaking hands with him.

CHAPTER XVII.

Shadows.

IN the bank, behind closed blinds, Warren Blake was working at his desk. He had been seen coming out of the bank every night for weeks. It did not cause comment. It was like Warren Blake, people thought, to be working early and late. No one who had not the key would have detected in the widened eyes and imperceptibly twitching nostrils a hint of the racking anxiety within. His pallor would have been attributed to the garish gaslight overhead. Quite deliberately he added up the column of figures before him. They spelled his crime.

Very cleverly, very characteristically, he had gone about it. Hampden, he knew, caught in the big deal into which Warren had followed him, had drifted into it—had hardly realized, as in the heat of necessity he asked the cashier to certify checks for which there were no funds, that it was a crime. Not so with Warren. In cold blood, with a nice calculation of the chances, he had stepped over the line that he had never before crossed. Once over, he had gone far. It had been a gambler's chance, the kind that many men take safely, and, when taken, had seemed all in his favor. But now the luck was running the other way. If the market sagged further, he would be done for.

No one, if told, would have believed why he had done it—because the bank was breaking anyhow under the load of worthless paper, most of it a legacy from his predecessor, and only a great deal of money could save it. It had been his pride to carry along an institution for the shakiness of which he was not responsible. It had become his life. He had risked all, even his own little carefully accumulated fortune, to save all, though he had made it a point of honor not to risk the trust properties in his keeping—he somehow made a distinction.

If the market should sag, how should he pay? Hampden, though bankrupt, would be able to work out of the hole. He could always get money somewhere. But Hampden could not, hence would not, try to save both. How then should he, Warren Blake, pay? With shame, certainly. With money—out of the question.

If the market should sag! Suddenly came to him the sure foreknowledge that it would sag. For an instant panic filled him. He put the books in their places, then began fumbling around a dusty shelf in a dark corner of the vault until his fingers found and drew forth an oblong pasteboard box. He opened it and looked at what lay within. He took it out and played with it. The gleaming, blue black thing seemed to hold a horrible fascination for him. It cost him an effort to put it away. He set the time lock, closed the vault and left.

John Dunmeade, having reached home, put his horse away in the stable. It was past 11 o'clock and he was tired. But he was not sleepy and he hated to go in out of the clear, still night. So he strolled uptown, intending to have a pipe with Haig before going to bed. His way took him past the bank just as Warren stepped out. The latter stopped.

"Working late, aren't you?" said John.

"I often do." He hesitated. "Are you out for a walk?"

"Down to Haig's. Will you go along?" John asked politely.

"A part of the way, if you don't mind. Sometimes, when I've been—working hard, I like to talk to some one to forget myself. How are the primaries going?"

"The primaries? Bad. In fact, they couldn't be worse."

"I thought as much. I'm sorry. I'd like to see you win."

John was thoroughly surprised. "I supposed you were against me."

"I've always voted for you. You are fitted for public service. You have something apart from mere intellect and ability, and, far rarer, the capacity to feel what we all accept in theory but not in fact—your relation to other men. I wish I could feel—could have felt it. Whatever gave you that fine sixth sense won't let you quit. It will carry you to the end—through weakness and strength."

Something in the man's voice rather than in what he said arrested John's interest. "Do you really think that, Warren?"

"There are things that one knows."

They halted, having reached the home of Silas Hicks, where Haig had his rooms. The cigar Warren had been smoking had gone out. He struck a match to relight it. He held the flaming taper before him for an instant longer than was necessary and John could see his face. It was composed but pale, the eyes extraordinarily bright.

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Primary day!

From one end of the state to the other the battle raged between red rose and white. When darkness put an end to the sanguinary conflict both sides were claiming and neither side had the victory. The issue must be removed for decision to the convention.

Benton county, a Murchell stronghold, chose its complement of delegates instructed for the Hon. G. Washington Jenkins. Also it gave, as it thought, John Dunmeade his quietus.

Senator Murchell and his guest, Jenkins, received the returns at the former's home. Jeremy Applegate, too, was there, not overwhelmed as he should have been by the honor, to help tabulate reports. Other politicians of the county dropped in. Once, about midnight, Jeremy answered a ring of the desk telephone, listened to the message and hung up the receiver without saying a word.

"What is it?" asked some one.

"John Dunmeade's beaten," Jeremy answered shortly.

Murchell looked at the clerk.

"Don't seem overjoyed, Jeremy?"

Jeremy pushed back his chair and got to his feet. He faced Murchell.

"I was thinkin'," he said quaveringly, "I was thinkin', it's a shame." The old body and the cracked, shrill voice shook with passion. "If you want to know, I voted fur him. It's the only man's job I ever done since I come to be your heeler. You've beaten an' broken him, the best man this county ever had, an'—an' you can have me kicked out of my job if you like."

The politicians were too amazed at this unbelievable instance of lese majeste even to laugh. Open mouthed they watched him as, quivering with defiance and the hate of the oppressed, he glared at Murchell much as in a former time he must have confronted the gray charge. They expected nothing less than that the lightnings would blast Jeremy where he stood; hence

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intensified stupefaction when Murchell said gravely: "Jeremy, you'd better go home. We'll talk about your job another time."

The old clerk turned and slowly stumped out of the room.

"Jeremy," commented the senator, "seems to have unearthed an unsuspected backbone."

The politicians, uncertain whether this was senatorial humor or not, chose silence as the course of discretion.

Later still, after the small fry had left, came the news that the opposition had freed itself and that Jerry Brent would control its convention, which meant that he would be nominated for governor. And this was matter for grave concern. Until nearly morning the leaders discussed candidates. The tenor of their conversation seemed to indicate that Wash Jenkins was not assured of the Murchell support. Nor did he seem unduly resentful because of this fact. Wash was a model retainer, humbly willing to take what he could get.

It was in the course of this discussion that Senator Murchell said, "If John Dunmeade weren't such a stubborn fool he would be just the man to meet Brent with." He spoke angrily.

The others gave respectful if surprised assent.

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In the financial district of the Steel City was no June day relaxation. In the exchange was a howling, frenzied mob struggling desperately to speed advancing fortune or to retain that which was vanishing in the Alabama Iron and Coal squeeze.

A glutton by methods that would have done credit to the robber barons had raped the treasure developed by weaker brethren. And now greater barons, more gluttonous, springing upon him in an unguarded moment, by like methods were tearing the spoils from his grasp. But no one saw a joke. Before it could end two great banking houses would be bankrupt, at least one flaring, arrogant speculator sensationally ruined and a thousand little greedy ones made penniless.

The mad scramble rose to a climax. In his office the man who was the storm center stood over the ticker. He had struggled, with the unthinking valor born of desperation, against the unwavering, relentless attacks made upon him. They had forced him back, farther and still farther back to his inner lines of defense, into the last ditch. Driven out of that he had made a last vain stand. Now he awaited the slaughter. He glared fixedly at the tape in his hand.

Suddenly the fixity broke up in an insane helpless rage that demanded physical expression. From his twisted mouth came an inarticulate, wolfish cry. With a convulsive jerk he snapped off the tape—kicked the ticker until it fell with a crash. A clerk in the outer office heard the noise and rushed in. Immediately, frightened by what he saw, he withdrew, closing the door behind him.

Stephen Hampden was not good to look upon as he rushed up and down the room, striking and kicking at the objects in his way. His face was purple—convulsed. He poured out unintelligible imprecations on the "curs," the "crooks," the "traitors" who had broken him. He had no thought for those upon whom he in his turn had fallen He was obsessed by the passion of his defeat.

The paroxysm spent itself. He flung himself, panting and still glaring, into a chair. The telephone rang. He paid no attention to it.

The clerk, trembling, opened the door. "You're wanted on the long distance, Mr. Hampden. It's"—

"I won't talk to them!" Hampden snarled back.

The clerk withdrew, then reappeared. "Beg pardon, Mr. Hampden," he insisted timidly, "but it's Mr. Blake of New Chelsea. He says he must talk to you."

"All right." Hampden caught up the telephone. He waited until the click told him that the clerk's receiver had been hung up, then snapped: "This is Hampden. What do you want?"

The precaution was unnecessary. The message was strangely worded. It would have meant nothing to an outsider. But Hampden had the key.

He hung up the receiver. And for a moment he allowed himself to be beaten down. Fear before a danger incurred in the heat of battle and now become imminent, terrible, through the folly of another, ousted rage. Mere defeat, bankruptcy, paled before this new penalty which he must pay. And fear steadied him, cleared his brain. He wasted no time in futile regrets. His mind darted hither and thither, swift and calculating, pondering and rejecting a hundred avenues of escape from the peril which must be averted before he could set out to recoup his losses. There was no thought of saving Warren Blake—only himself.

Late in the day he went out—to beg the mercy he had never shown.

Katherine Hampden was alone that evening. She was often alone nowadays, but not entirely because, as she had told John Dunmeade, she had been assigned a berth on the shelf reserved for unmarriageable females. There were many men who would have gladly undertaken to relieve her solitude. But these found her extremely unapproachable. Those whom she would have welcomed most gladly had least time for dalliance in drawing rooms.

The truth was, she was disappointed. Mature perception, quickened by a glimpse of a different ideal of life, had seen beyond the false setting of romance behind which men seek to hide the ugliness of the greedy, unscrupulous scramble for gold. She would have married Gregg had it not been for the fact that the acid of his calling was etching more and more clearly upon his frank, clean exterior a picture of what lay within. As it was, she had sent him away.

She was waiting for her father's homecoming. While she waited she glanced through the evening paper. In it the day's doings on the stock exchange were featured. The account had it that Hampden had been hard hit—even vaguely hinted that he might have to fail. She was amazed at the lack of emotion with which she read that their fortune, hitherto so potent and all sufficing, had in a day been sadly shaken if not totally destroyed. She tried to picture to herself what it must mean to them—the economies, the privations even, the loss of caste among a set that measured worth by stocks and bonds. Somehow the picture could not profoundly alarm, partly perhaps because she knew too little of want to draw convincingly. She could not even feel deeply for her father, although she had for him a genuine daughter's affection and knew what a blow failure would be to him.

"Poor father!" she smiled half pityingly. "I suppose nothing can persuade him that it isn't a horrible calamity. I ought to feel so, too, but— Heigho! Is this Katherine Hampden?"

She went on turning the pages of the paper until her casual glance was caught by a familiar name in a satirical editorial under the caption "A Fool Errant." The fool errant was John Dunmeade, recently—and happily, in the editor's opinion—disposed of at the primaries.

Her color deepened suddenly and for another reason. Memory had recalled to her something she had once said to this man. "When you were a broken down, middle aged failure. * * * I should be looking up at the men who were conquering. * * * And I should regret."

Well, her prophecy had been fulfilled sooner than she had expected. He had been cast aside even by his own neighbors. But there was something large and fine about him which forbade pity and commanded respect, made even such men as Gregg, with their vitiated ideals, want to do him favors "on general principles."

"To think that I could have said that to him!" she cried to herself. "What a cad I was! If only I hadn't said 'Up at the men who were conquering!' John Dunmeade, you tower above them all."

She was still dreaming of John when her father came in.

His face was haggard, set in an ugly, bitter scowl. The sympathy that had lagged as she read of the wiping out of a fortune leaped when she saw the man who had lost it.

"Cleaned out," he said curtly.

She went to him quickly, laying an impulsive hand on his shoulder. "Oh, well, dear, never mind. It might be so much worse. You might have been taken sick or had an accident, or—or anything. I've just been thinking how nice it would be to go back home to New Chelsea and start all over again in—in something that wouldn't take all your time. I—I'd be so glad to get acquainted with you again." She gave a little laugh.

"You talk like a fool!" he replied roughly. "What could I do in that rube town—run a grocery store? Here's where I can make money. And I can make all we need, once I get things straightened out. I've been broke before. The immediate question is to keep out of jail."

She started back from him with a gasp. "Out—of—jail! Father!"

"Out of jail, I said. I'm 'into' the New Chelsea bank and I've nothing left to pay with."

"Is—is it much?"

"It wasn't, but it is now."

"But we must pay it back. There are the bonds you gave me. And the New Chelsea houses that mother owns—she'll give those up. And"—

"Not a third enough."

She dropped weakly into a chair, staring at him foolishly. She was very pale, dazed by the sudden new calamity that had fallen.

"But surely," she insisted anxiously, "the bank won't press you. They know you'll pay it all back when you can."

"What do you know about it? It isn't the bank; it's the government that will make the trouble. That fool Blake is in worse than I am. The bank's gutted, cleaned out. And the bank examiner is overdue. If he comes around now"— With a gesture he sketched the impending catastrophe.

"Stephen, what is the matter now?" came a languid voice from the doorway. "And please, for my sake, lower your voice. It's so vulgar to talk loudly before servants." Mrs. Hampden entered and, with an air of utter exhaustion, deposited her substantial self in an easy chair.

"Father," Katherine explained, with cruel brevity, "has lost his money."

It was an unexpected tonic. The invalid suddenly sat bolt upright and almost shrieked. "Lost our money? Do you mean to say, Stephen Hampden, that you've been selfish enough to gamble our money away after all I've suffered and denied myself"—

She threw her hands aloft and fell back moaning. "Oh, in my weak condition, when my heart"—

"Maria, you're a fraud. Even with your laziness and indulgences you're the picture of vulgar health."

Mrs. Hampden rose. She managed a stagger that would have done credit to Bernhardt, clutching at tables and chairs for the doubtfully necessary support out of the room.

Hampden growled again, unintelligibly.

"Father, isn't there something to be done?"

"Murchell. I've an appointment with him in New Chelsea tomorrow. Some of his rascally politicians are in as deep as Blake and I."

"Can he help?"

"He can. And he's got to."

"Do you mind if I go up with you tomorrow?"

"All right. And I wish," he exclaimed querulously, "you'd go away and let me alone."

In her darkened room Katherine sat by the window for a long time, thinking with a feeling of sickening disgust on the sordid scene between her parents just enacted. This was the other side, the unlovely other side, of that splendid life of conquest for which she had put the best of all aside. Thus it made victims of its votaries. She thought of John.

(Continued in Next Friday's Issue.)

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