# THE GOLD BRICK

By BRAND WHITLOCK

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TEN thousand dollars a year. Neil Kittrell left the office of the Morning Telegraph in a daze. He was insensible of the raw February air, heedless of sloppy pavements; the gray day had suddenly turned gold. He could not realize it all at once; ten thousand a year—for him and Edith! His heart swelled with love of Edith; she had sacrificed so much to become the wife of a man who had tried to make an artist of himself, and of whom fate, or economic determinism, or something, had made a cartoonist. What a surprise for her! He must hurry home.

In the swelling of his heart he felt a love not only of Edith but of the whole world. The people he met seemed dear to him; he felt friendly with every one, and beamed on perfect strangers with broad, cheerful smiles. He stopped to buy some flowers for Edith—daffodils, or tulips, which promised spring; and he took the daffodils because the girl said:

"I think yellow is such a spirituelle color, don't you?" and inclined her head in a most artistic manner.

But daffodils, after all, which would have been much the day before, seemed insufficient in the light of new prosperity, and Kittrell bought a large azalea, beautiful in its graceful spread of pink blooms.

"Where shall I send it?" asked the girl, whose cheeks were as pink as azaleas themselves.

"I think I'll call a cab and take it to her myself," said Kittrell.

And she sighed over the romance of this rich young gentleman and the girl of the azalea, who, no doubt, was as beautiful as the young woman who was playing Lottie, the Poor Saleslady, at the Lyceum that very week.

Kittrell and the azalea bowled along Claybourne avenue; he leaned back on the cushions, and adopted the expression of ennui appropriate to that thoroughfare. Would Edith now prefer Claybourne avenue? With ten thousand a year they could, perhaps—and yet, at first it would be best not to put on airs, but to go right on as they were, in the flat. Then the thought came to him that now, as the cartoonist on the Telegraph, his name would become as well known in Claybourne avenue as it had been in the homes of the poor and humble during his years on the Post. And his thoughts flew to those homes where tired men at evening looked for his cartoons and children laughed at his funny pictures. It gave him a pang; he had felt a subtle bond between himself and all those thousands who read the Post. It was hard to leave them. The Post might be yellow, but, as the girl had said, yellow was a spirituelle color, and the Post brought something into their lives—lives that were scorned by the Telegraph and by these people on the avenue. Could he make new friends here, where the cartoons he drew and the Post that printed them had been contemned, if not despised? His mind flew back to the dingy office of the Post; to the boys there, the whole good-natured, happy-go-lucky gang; and to Hardy—ah, Hardy!—who had been so good to him, and given him his big chance, had taken such pains and interest, helping him with ideas and suggestions, criticism and sympathy. To tell Hardy that he was going to leave him, here on the eve of the campaign—and Clayton, the mayor, he would have to tell him, too—oh, the devil! Why must he think of these things now?

After all, when he had reached home, and had run upstairs with the news and the azalea, Edith did not seem delighted.

"But, dearie, business is business," he argued, "and we need the money!"

"Yes, I know; doubtless you're right. Only please don't say 'business is business;' it isn't like you, and——"

"But think what it will mean—ten thousand a year!"

"Oh, Neil, I've lived on ten thousand a year before, and I never had half the fun that I had when we were getting along on twelve hundred."

"Yes, but then we were always dreaming of the day when I'd make a lot; we lived on that hope, didn't we?"

Edith laughed. "You used to say we lived on love."

"You're not serious." He turned to gaze moodily out of the window. And then she left the azalea and perched on the flat arm of his chair.

"Dearest," she said, "I am serious. I know all this means to you. We're human, and we don't like to 'chip at crusts like Hindus,' even for the sake of youth and art. I never had illusions about love in a cottage and all that. Only, dear, I have been happy, so very happy, with you, because—well, because I was living in an atmosphere of honest purpose, honest ambition, and honest desire to do some good thing in the world. I had never known such an atmosphere before. At home, you know, father and Uncle James and the boys—well, it was all money, money, money with them, and they couldn't understand why I——"

"Could marry a poor newspaper artist! That's just the point."

She put her hand to his lips.

"Now, dear! If they couldn't understand, so much the worse for them. If they thought it meant sacrifice to me, they were mistaken. I have been happy in this flat; only——" she leaned back and inclined her head with her eyes asquint—"only the paper in this room is atrocious; it's a typical landlord's selection—McGraw picked it out. You see what it means to be merely rich."

She was so pretty thus that he kissed her, and then she went on:

"And so, dear, if I didn't seem to be as impressed and delighted as you hoped to find me, it is because I was thinking of Mr. Hardy and the poor, dear, common little Post, and then—of Mr. Clayton. Did you think of him?"

"Yes."

"You'll have to—to cartoon him?"

"I suppose so."

The fact he had not allowed himself to face was close to both of them, and the subject was dropped until just as he was going downtown—this time to break the news to Hardy—he went into the room he sarcastically said he might begin to call his studio now that he was getting ten thousand a year, to look for a sketch he had promised Nolan for the sporting page. And there on his drawing board was an unfinished cartoon. He had begun it a few days before to use on the occasion of Clayton's renomination. It had been a labor of love, and Kittrell suddenly realized how good it was. He had put into it all of his belief in Clayton, all of his devotion to the cause for which Clayton toiled and sacrificed, and in the simple lines he experienced the artist's ineffable felicity; he had shown how good, how noble, how true a man Clayton was. All at once he realized the sensation the cartoon would produce, how it would delight and hearten Clayton's followers, how it would touch Clayton. It would be a tribute to the man and the friendship, but now a tribute broken, unfinished. Kittrell gazed a moment longer, and in that moment Edith came.

"The dear, healthful soul!" she exclaimed softly. "Neil, it is wonderful. It is not a cartoon; it is a portrait. It shows what you might do with a brush."

Kittrell could not speak, and he turned the drawing-board to the wall.

When he had gone, Edith sat and thought—of Neil, of the new position, of Clayton. He had loved Neil, and been so proud of his work; he had shown a frank, naive pleasure in the cartoon Neil had made of him. That last time he was there, thought Edith, he had said that without Neil the "good old cause," as he called it, using Whitman's phrase, could never have triumphed in that town. And now, would he come again? Would he ever stand in that room and, with his big, hearty laugh, clasp an arm around Neil's shoulder, or speak of her in his good, friendly way as "the little woman?" Would he come now, in the terrible days of the approaching campaign, for rest and sympathy—come as he used to come in other campaigns, worn and weary from all the brutal opposition, the villification and abuse and mud-slinging? She closed her eyes. She could not think that far.

Kittrell found the task of telling Hardy just as difficult as he expected it to be, but by some mercy it did not last long. Explanation had not been necessary; he had only to make the first hesitating approaches, and Hardy understood. Hardy was, in a way, hurt; Kittrell saw that, and rushed to his own defense:

"I hate to go, old man. I don't like it a little bit—but, you know, business is business, and we need the money."

He even tried to laugh as he advanced this last conclusive reason, and Hardy, for all he showed in voice or phrase, may have agreed with him.

"It's all right, Kit," he said. "I'm sorry; I wish we could pay you more, but—well, good luck."

That was all. Kittrell gathered up the few articles he had at the office, gave Nolan his sketch, bade the boys good-by—bade them good-by as if he were going on a long journey, never to see them more—and then he went.

After he had made the break it did not seem so bad as he had anticipated. At first things went on smoothly enough. The campaign had not opened, and he was free to exercise his talents outside the political field. He drew cartoons dealing with banal subjects, touching with the gentle satire of his humorous pencil foibles which all the world agreed about, and let vital questions alone. And he and Edith enjoyed themselves; indulged oftener in things they loved; went more frequently to the theater; appeared at recitals; dined now and then downtown. They began to realize certain luxuries they had not known for a long time—some he himself had never known, some that Edith had not known since she left her father's home to become his bride.

But March came, and the politicians began to bluster like the season. Late one afternoon he was on his way to the office with a cartoon, the first in which he had seriously to attack Clayton. Benson, the managing editor of the Telegraph, had conceived it, and Kittrell had worked on it that day in sickness of heart. Every lying line of this new presentation of Clayton had cut him like some biting acid; but he had worked on, trying to reassure himself with the argument that he was a mere agent, devoid of personal responsibility. But it had been hard, and then Edith, after her custom, had asked to see it, he had said:

"Oh, you don't want to see it; it's no good."

"Is it of him?" she had asked.

And when he nodded she had gone away without another word. Now, as he hurried through the crowded streets, he was conscious that it was no good, indeed; and he was divided between the artist's regret and the friend's joy in the fact. But it made him tremble. Was his hand to forget its cunning? And then, suddenly, he heard a familiar voice, and there beside him, with his hand on his shoulder, stood the mayor.

"Why, Neil, my boy, how are you?" he said, and he took Kittrell's hand as warmly as ever. For a moment Kittrell was relieved, and then his heart sank; for he had a quick realization that it was the coward within him that felt the relief, and the man the sickness. If Clayton had reproached him, or cut him, it would have made it easier; but Clayton did none of these things, and Kittrell was irresistibly drawn to the subject himself.

"You heard of my—new job?" he asked.

"Yes," said Clayton, "I heard."

"Well—" Kittrell began.

"I'm sorry," Clayton said.

"So was I," Kittrell hastened to say. "But I felt it—well, a duty, some way—to Edith. You know—we—need the money." And he gave the cynical laugh that went with the argument.

"What does she think? Does she feel that way about it?"

Kittrell laughed, not cynically now, but uneasily and with embarrassment, for Clayton's blue eyes were on him, those eyes that could look into men and understand them so.

"Of course you know," Kittrell went on nervously, "there is nothing personal in this. We newspaper fellows simply do what we are told; we obey orders like soldiers, you know. With the policy of the paper we have nothing to do. Just like Dick Jennings, who was a red-hot free-trader and used to write free-trade editorials for the Times—he went over to the Telegraph, you remember, and writes all those protection arguments."

The mayor did not seem to be interested in Dick Jennings, or in the ethics of his profession.

"Of course, you know, I'm for your, Mr. Clayton, just exactly as I've always been. I'm going to vote for you."

This did not seem to interest the mayor, either.

"And, maybe, you know—I thought, perhaps," he snatched at this bright new idea that had come to him just in the nick of time, "that I might help you by my cartoons in the Telegraph; that is, I might keep them from being as bad as they might——"

"But that wouldn't be dealing fairly with your new employers, Neil," the mayor said.

Kittrell was making more and more a mess of this whole miserable business, and he was basely glad when they reached the corner.

"Well, good-by, my boy," said the mayor, as they parted. "Remember me to the little woman."

Kittrell watched him as he went on down the avenue, swinging along in his free way, the broad felt hat he wore riding above all the other hats in the throng that filled the sidewalk; and Kittrell sighed in deep depression.

When he turned in his cartoon, Benson scanned it a moment, cocked his head this side and that, puffed his brier pipe, and finally said:

"I'm afraid this is hardly up to you. This figure of Clayton, here—it hasn't got the stuff in it. You want to show him as he is. We want the people to know what a four-flushing, hypnotical, demagogical blatherskite he is—with all his rot about the people and their damned rights!"

Benson was all unconscious of the inconsistency of having concern for a people he so despised, and Kittrell did not observe it, either. He was on the point of defending Clayton, but he restrained himself and listened to Benson's suggestions. He remained at the office for two hours, trying to change the cartoon to Benson's satisfaction, with a growing hatred of the work and a disgust with himself that now and then almost drove him to mad destruction. He felt like splashing the piece with India ink, or ripping it with his knife. But he worked on, and submitted it again. He had failed, of course; failed to express in it that hatred of a class which Benson unconsciously disguised as a hatred of Clayton, a hatred which Kittrell could not express because he did not feel it; and he failed because art deserts her devotees when they are false to truth.

"Well, it'll have to do," said Benson, as he looked it over, "but let's have a little more to the next one. Damn it! I wish I could draw. I'd cartoon the crook."

In default of which ability, Benson set himself to write one of those savage editorials, in which he poured out on Clayton that venom of which he seemed to have such an inexhaustible supply.

But on one point Benson was right; Kittrell was not up to himself. As the campaign opened, as the city was swept with the excitement of it, with meetings at noon-day and at night, office-seekers flying about in automobiles, walls covered with pictures of candidates, handbills scattered in the streets to swirl in the wild March winds, and men quarreling over whether Clayton or Ellsworth should be mayor, Kittrell had to draw a political cartoon each day; and as he struggled with his work, less and less the old joy came to cheer and spur him on. To read the ridicule, the abuse, which the Telegraph heaped on Clayton, the distortion of facts concerning his candidature, the unfair reports of his meetings, sickened him, and more than all, he was filled with disgust as he tried to match in caricature these libels of the man he so loved and honored. It was bad enough to have to flatter Clayton's opponent, to picture him as a noble, disinterested character, ready to sacrifice himself for the public weal. Into his pictures of this man, attired in the long black coat of conventional respectability, with the smug face of pharisaism, he could get nothing but cant and hypocrisy; but in his caricatures of Clayton there was that which pained him worse—disloyalty, untruth, and now and then, to the discerning few who knew the tragedy of Kittrell's soul, there was pity. And thus his work declined in value; lacking all sincerity, all faith in itself or its purpose, it became false, uncertain, full of jarring notes, and, in short, never once rang true. As for Edith, she never discussed his work now; she spoke of the campaign little, and yet he knew she was deeply concerned, and she grew hot with resentment at the methods of the Telegraph. Her only consolation was derived from the Post, which, of course, supported Clayton; and the final drop of bitterness in Kittrell's cup of woe came one evening when he realized that she was following, with sympathetic interest, the cartoons in that paper.

For the Post had a new cartoonist, Banks, a boy whom Hardy had picked up somewhere and was training to the work Kittrell had laid down. To Kittrell there was a cruel fascination in the progress Banks was making; he watched it with a critical professional eye, at first with amusement, then with surprise, and now at least, in the discovery of Edith's interest, with a keen jealousy of which he was ashamed. The boy was crude and untrained; his work was not to be compared with Kittrell's, master of line that he was, but Kittrell saw that it had the thing his work now lacked, the vital, primal thing—sincerity, belief, love. The spark was there, and Kittrell knew how Hardy would nurse that spark and fan it, and keep it alive and burning until it should eventually blaze up in a fine white flame. And Kittrell realized, as the days went by, that Banks' work was telling, and that his own was failing. He had, from the first, missed the atmosphere of the Post, missed the camaraderie of the congenial spirits there, animated by a common purpose, inspired and led by Hardy, whom they all loved—loved as he himself once loved him, loved as he loved him still—and dare not look him in the face when they met!

He found the atmosphere of the Telegraph alien and distasteful. There all was different; the men had little joy in their work, little interest in it, save perhaps the newspaper man's inborn love of a good story or a beat. They were all cynical, without loyalty or faith; they secretly made fun of the Telegraph, of its editors and owners; they had no belief in its cause; and its pretentions to respectability, its parade of virtue, excited only their derision. And, slowly it began to dawn on Kittell that the great moral law worked always and everywhere, even on newspapers, and that there was reflected inevitably and logically in the work of the men on that staff the hatred, the lack of principle, the bigotry and intolerance of its proprietors; and this same lack of principle tainted and made meretricious his own work, and enervated the editorials so that the Telegraph, no matter how carefully edited or how dignified in typographical appearance, was, nevertheless, without real influence in the community.

Meanwhile Clayton was gaining ground. It was less than two weeks before election. The campaign waxed more and more bitter, and as the forces opposed to him foresaw defeat, they became ugly in spirit, and desperate. The Telegraph took on a tone more menacing and brutal, and Kittrell knew that the crisis had come. The might of the powers massed against Clayton appalled Kittrell; they thundered at him through many brazen mouths, but Clayton held on his high way unperturbed. He was speaking by day and night to thousands. Such meetings he had never had before. Kittrell had visions of him before those immense audiences in halls, in tents, in the raw open air of that rude March weather, making his appeals to the heart of the great mass. A fine, splendid, romantic figure he was, striking to the imagination, this champion of the people's cause, and Kittrell longed for the lost chance. Oh, for one day on the Post now!

One morning at breakfast, as Edith read the Telegraph, Kittrell saw the tears well slowly in her brown eyes.

"Oh," she said, "it is shameful!" She clenched her little fists. "Oh, if I were only a man I'd—" She could not in her impotent feminine rage say what she would do; she could only grind her teeth. Kittrell bent his head over his plate; his coffee choked him.

"Dearest," she said presently, in another tone, "tell me, how is he? Do you—ever see him? Will he win?"

"No, I never see him. But he'll win; I wouldn't worry."

"He used to come here," she went on, "to rest a moment, to escape from all this hateful confusion and strife. He is killing himself! And they aren't worth it—those ignorant people—they aren't worth such sacrifices."

He got up from the table and turned away, and then, realizing quickly, she flew to his side and put her arms about his neck and said:

"Forgive me, dearest, I didn't mean—only——"

"Oh, Edith," he said, "this is killing me. I feel like a dog."

"Don't, dear; he is big enough and good enough; he will understand."

"Yes; that only makes it harder, only makes it hurt the more."

That afternoon, in the car, he heard no talk but of the election; and downtown, in a cigar store where he stopped for cigarettes, he heard some men talking mysteriously, in the hollow voice of rumor, of some sensation, some scandal. It alarmed him, and as he went into the office he met Manning, the Telegraph's political man.

"Tell me, Manning," Kittrell said, "how does it look?"

"Damn bad for us."

"For us?"

"Well, for our mob of burglars and second-story workers here—the gang we represent." He took a cigarette from the box Kittrell was opening.

"And will he win?"

"Will he win?" said Manning, exhaling the words on the thin, level stream of smoke that came from his lungs. "Will he win? In a walk, I tell you. He's got 'em beat to a standstill right now. That's the dope."

"But what about this story of——"

"Aw, that's all a pipe-dream of Burns'. I'm running it in the morning, but it's nothing; it's a shine. They're big fools to print it. But it's their last card; they're desperate. They won't stop at anything, or at any crime, except those requiring courage. Burns is in there with Benson now; so is Salton, and old man Glenn, and the rest of the bunco family. They're framing it up. When I saw old Glenn go in, with his white side-whiskers, I knew the widow and the orphan were in danger again, and that he was going bravely to the front for 'em. Say, that young Banks is comin', isn't he? That's a peach, that cartoon of his tonight."

Kittrell went on down the hall to the art room to wait until Benson should be free. But it was not long until he was sent for, and as he entered the managing editor's room he was instantly sensible of the somber atmosphere of a grave and solemn council of war. Benson introduced him to Glenn, the banker, to Salton, the party boss, and to Burns, the president of the street car company; and as Kittrell sat down he looked about him, and could scarcely repress a smile as he recalled Manning's estimate of Glenn. The old man sat there, as solemn and unctuous as ever he had in his pew at church. Benson, red of race, was more plainly perturbed, but Salton was as reserved, as immobile, as inscrutable as ever, his narrow, pointed face, with its vulpine expression, being perhaps paler than usual. Benson had on his desk before him the cartoon Kittrell had finished that day.

"Mr. Kittrell," Benson began, "we've been talking over the political situation, and I was showing these gentlemen this cartoon. It isn't, I fear, in your best style; it lacks the force, the argument, we'd like just at this time. That isn't the Telegraph Clayton, Mr. Kittrell." He pointed with the amber stem of his pipe. "Not at all. Clayton is a strong, smart, unscrupulous, dangerous man! We've reached a crisis in this campaign; if we can't turn things in the next three days we're lost, that's all; we might as well face it. Tomorrow we make an important revelation concerning the character of Clayton, and we want to follow it up the morning after by a cartoon that will be a stunner, a clincher. We have discussed it here among ourselves, and this is our idea."

Benson drew a crude, bald outline, indicating the cartoon they wished Kittrell to draw. The idea was so coarse, so brutal, so revolting, that Kittrell stood aghast, and, as he stood, he was aware of Salton's little eyes fixed on him. Benson waited; they all waited.

"Well," said Benson, "what do you think of it?"

Kittrell paused an instant, and then said:

"I won't draw it; that's what I think of it."

Benson flushed angrily and looked up at him.

"We are paying you a very large salary, Mr. Kittrell, and your work, if you will pardon me, has not been up to what we were led to expect."

"You are quite right, Mr. Benson, but I can't draw that cartoon."

"Well, great God!" yelled Burns, "what have we got here—a gold brick?" He rose with a vivid sneer on his red face, plunged his hands in his pockets and took two or three nervous strides across the room. Kittrell looked at him, and slowly his eyes blazed out of a face that had gone white on the instant.

"What did you say, sir?" he demanded.

Burns thrust his red face, with its prognathic jaw, menacingly toward Kittrell.

"I said that in you we'd got a gold brick."

"You?" said Kittrell. "What have you do with it? I don't work for you."

"You don't? Well, I guess it's us that puts up——"

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen!" said Glenn, waving a white, pacificatory hand.

"Yes, let me deal with this, if you please," said Benson, looking hard at Burns. The street car man sneered again, then, in ostentatious contempt, looked out the window. And in the stillness Benson continued:

"Mr. Kittrell, think a minute. Is your decision final?"

"It is final, Mr. Benson," said Kittrell. "And as for you, Burns," he glared angrily at the man, "I wouldn't draw that cartoon for all the dirty money that all the bribing street car companies in the world could put into Mr. Glenn's bank here. Good evening, gentlemen."

It was not until he stood again in his own home that Kittrell felt the physical effects which the spiritual squalor of such a scene was certain to produce in a nature like his.

"Neil! What is the matter?" Edith fluttered toward him in alarm.

He sank into a chair, and for a moment he looked as if he would faint, but he looked wanly up at her and said:

"Nothing; I'm all right; just a little weak. I've gone through a sickening, horrible scene——"

"Dearest!"

"And I'm off the Telegraph—and a man once more!"

He bent over, with his elbows on his knees, his head in his hands, and when Edith put her calm, caressing hand on his brow she found that it was moist from nervousness. Presently he was able to tell her the whole story.

"It was, after all, Edith, a fitting conclusion to my experience on the Telegraph. I suppose, though, that to people who are used to ten thousand a year such scenes are nothing at all." She saw in this trace of his old humor that he was himself again, and she hugged his head to her bosom.

"Oh, dearest," she said, "I'm proud of you—and happy again."

They were, indeed, both happy, happier than they had been for weeks.

The next morning after breakfast she saw by his manner, by the humorous, almost comical expression about his eyes, that he had an idea. In this mood of satisfaction—this mood that comes too seldom in the artist's life—she knew it was wise to let him alone. And he lighted his pipe and went to work. She heard him now and then, singing or whistling or humming; she scented his pipe, then cigarettes; then, at last, after two hours, he called in a loud, triumphant tone:

"Oh, Edith!"

She was at the door in an instant, and, waving his hand grandly at the drawing board, he turned to her with that expression which connotes the greatest joy gods or mortals can know—the joy of beholding one's own work and finding it good. He had, as she saw, returned to the cartoon of Clayton he had laid aside when the tempter came; and now it was finished. Its simple lines revealed Clayton's character, as the sufficient answer to all the charges the Telegraph might make against him. Edith leaned against the door and looked long and critically.

"It was fine before," she said presently; "it's better now. Before it was a portrait of the man; this shows his soul."

"Well, it's how he looks to me," said Neil, "after a month in which to appreciate him."

"But what," she said, stooping and peering at the edge of the drawing, where, despite much knife-scraping, vague figures appeared, "what's that?"

"Oh, I'm ashamed to tell you," he said. "I'll have to paste over that before it's electrotyped. You see, I had a notion of putting in the gang, and I drew four little figures—Benson, Burns, Salton and Glenn; they were plotting—oh, it was foolish and unworthy. I decided I didn't want anything of hatred in it—just as he wouldn't want anything of hatred in it; so I rubbed them out."

"Well, I'm glad. It is beautiful; it makes up for everything; it's an appreciation—worthy of the man."

When Kittrell entered the office of the Post the boys greeted him with delight, for there had been rumors of the break which the absence of a "Kit" cartoon in the Telegraph that morning had confirmed. But, if Hardy was surprised, his surprise was swallowed up in his joy, and Kittrell was grateful to him for the delicacy with which he touched the subject that consumed the newspaper and political world with curiosity.

"I'm glad, Kit," was all that he said. "You know that."

Then he forgot everything in the cartoon, and he showed his instant recognition of its significance by snatching out his watch, pushing a button, and saying to Garland, who came to the door in his shirt sleeves:

"Tell Nic to hold the first edition for a five-column first-page cartoon. And send this up right away."

They had a last look at it before it went, and after gazing a moment in silence Hardy said:

"It's the greatest thing you ever did, Kit, and it comes at the psychological moment. It'll elect him."

"Oh, he was elected, anyhow."

Hardy shook his head, and in the movement Kittrell saw how the strain of the campaign had told on him. "No, he wasn't; the way they've been hammering him is something fierce; and the Telegraph—well, your cartoons and all, you know."

"But my cartoons in the Telegraph were rotten. Any work that is not sincere, not intellectually honest——"

Hardy interrupted him:

"Yes; but, Kit, you're so good that your rotten is better than most anybody's best." He smiled, and Kittrell blushed and looked away.

Hardy was right. The "Kit" cartoon, back in the Post, created its sensation, and after it appeared the political reporters said it had started a landslide to Clayton; that the betting was 3 to 1 and no takers, and that it was all over but the shouting.

That night, as they were at dinner, the telephone rang, and in a minute Neil knew by Edith's excited and delighted reiteration of "yes," "yes," who had called up. And then he heard her say:

"Indeed I will; I'll come every night and sit in the front seat."

When Kittrell displaced Edith at the telephone, he heard the voice of John Clayton, lower in register and somewhat husky after four weeks' speaking, but more musical than ever in Kittrell's ears when it said:

"I just told the little woman, Neil, that I didn't know how to say it, so I wanted her to thank you for me. It was beautiful in you, and I wish I were worthy of it; it was simply your own good soul expressing itself."

And it was the last delight to Kittrell to hear that voice and to know that all was well.

But one question remained unsettled. Kittrell had been on the Telegraph a month, and his contract differed from that ordinarily made by the members of a newspaper staff, in that he was paid by the year, though in monthly instalments. Kittrell knew that he had broken his contract on grounds which the sordid law would not see or recognize and the average court think absurd, and that the Telegraph might legally refuse to pay him at all. He hoped the Telegraph would do this! But it did not; on the contrary, he received the next day a check for his month's work. He held it up for Edith's inspection.

"Of course, I'll have to send it back," he said.

"Certainly."

"Do you think me quixotic?"

"Well, we're poor enough as it is—let's have some luxuries; let's be quixotic until after election, at least."

"Sure," said Neil; "just what I was thinking. I'm going to do a cartoon every day for the Post until election day, and I'm not going to take a cent. I don't want to crowd Banks out, you know, and I want to do my part for Clayton and the cause, and do it, just once, for the pure love of the thing."

Those last days of the campaign were, indeed, luxuries to Kittrell and to Edith, days of work and fun and excitement. All day Kittrell worked on his cartoons, and in the evening they went to Clayton's meetings. The experience was a revelation to them both—the crowds, the waiting for the singing of the automobile's siren, the wild cheers that greeted Clayton, and then his speech, his appeals to the best there was in men. He had never made such speeches, and long afterward Edith could hear those cheers and see the faces of those workingmen aglow with the hope, the passion, the fervent religion of democracy. And those days came to their glad climax that night when they met at the office of the Post to receive the returns, in an atmosphere quivering with excitement, with messenger boys and reporters coming and going, and in the street outside an immense crowd, swaying and rocking between the walls on either side, with screams and shouts and mad huzzas, and the wild blowing of horns—all the hideous, happy noise an American election night crowd can make.

Late in the evening Clayton had made his way, somehow unnoticed, through the crowd, and entered the office. He was happy in the great triumph he would not accept as personal, claiming it always for the cause; but as he dropped into the chair Hardy pushed toward him, they all saw how weary he was.

Just at that moment the roar in the street below swelled to a mighty crescendo, and Hardy cried:

"Look!"

They ran to the window. The boys upstairs who were manipulating the stereopticon had thrown on the screen an enormous picture of Clayton, the portrait Kittrell had drawn for his cartoon.

"Will you say now there isn't the personal note in it?" Edith asked.

Clayton glanced out the window, across the dark, surging street, at the picture.

"Oh, it's not me they're cheering for," he said; "it's for Kit, here."

"Well, perhaps some of it's for him," Edith admitted, loyally.

They were silent, seized irresistibly by the emotion that mastered the mighty crowd in the dark streets below. Edith was strangely moved. Presently she could speak:

"Is there anything sweeter in life than to know that you have done a good thing—and done it well?"

"Yes," said Clayton, "just one; to have a few friends who understand."

"You are right," said Edith. "It is so with art, and it must be so with life; it makes an art of life."

It was dark enough there by the window for her to slip her hand into that of Neil, who had been musing silently on the crowd.

"I can never say again," she said softly, "that those people are not worth sacrifice. They are worth all; they are everything; they are the hope of the world; and their longings and their needs, and the possibility of bringing them to pass, are all that give significance to life."

"That's what America is for," said Clayton, "and it's worth while to be allowed to help even in a little way to make, as old Walt says, 'a nation of friends, of equals.'"

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