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**HIS RISE TO POWER**

Senator Murchell sat to all outward  
seeming impassive. He listened, as as-  
tonished as the rest, but with under-  
standing and—he was himself amazed  
to mark it—sadly. For he read in the  
ardent face and words a passion for a  
hopeless ideal. So much power, he  
thought, going to waste! For he  
knew, better than did those who pos-  
sessed it, the power of moral passion  
controlled—but always properly con-  
trolled! Was there not some way to  
bind this force to his interest?

Bribery at the polls and falsification  
of election returns, familiar weapons  
of machine politics, so long used that  
they had ceased to arouse horror and  
revolt in the careless, calloused hearts  
of the people, were John's text. They  
explained the continuance of the ma-  
chine in power. They shed a bright  
light, too, on the so-called genius of  
certain political leaders at which men  
marveled as at some miraculous mani-  
festation of godlike mind—it was not  
genius, merely erudite, primitive dishon-  
esty requiring the direction of no com-  
manding intellect, needing nothing but  
the will to debauch others' honor. "It  
is the case of government by individu-  
al craft and greed against government  
by the law that is the expression of  
the moral sense of the people," he said,  
and sat down. The audience stirred  
nervously. Murchell smiled grimly.

The voice of the judge was cold and  
even, devoid of emotion, as he began  
to instruct the jury. Critical listeners  
observed that his charge favored the  
defendant rather more strongly than  
the evidence seemed to require. They  
attributed it to his anxiety not to be  
blamed by the fact that the district at-  
torney was his son. Judge Dunmende  
was said to possess an admirably judi-  
cial temperament. The jury, impor-  
tantly led by the fat bailiff, filed out  
of the courtroom. There were no other  
cases on the day's list, and the judge  
stalked down from the bench to await  
the verdict in his chambers. John  
went to his office. Senator Murchell  
and Whitledge conducted the drop-  
ping Sheehan to the witness room away  
from the curious eyes of the crowd.  
Most of the spectators waited to see  
the end of the drama.

A half hour later the buzz of conver-  
sation suddenly ceased. The judge was  
returning to the bench. Sheehan, with  
Whitledge and Murchell, took his  
seat by the table. They were fol-  
lowed by John. Then the jury filed  
back into the box.

"Gentlemen of the jury, hearken to  
your verdict as the court hath recorded  
it. You find the defendant guilty as  
indicted. And so say you all?" said  
the clerk.

The jurors nodded. Sheehan fell  
back in his chair with an audible  
groan. Two big tears coursed ludic-  
rously down his fat cheeks. But no-  
body laughed. He plucked anxiously  
at Murchell's sleeve.

"Have I got to go to jail?" he whim-  
pered. Murchell drew away from the touch.  
"Not unless our friend Whitledge has  
forgotten how to delay justice."

The jury was discharged. Whit-  
ledge informed the court that the de-  
fense would move for a new trial, bail  
was renewed, and the court was ad-  
journed. The audience slowly made  
its way out into the square, where lit-  
tle knots of noisy, excited men gath-  
ered.

John saw Sheehan standing forlornly  
by the table. The big, ponderous figure  
with the misery shining out of its eyes  
seemed very pathetic. And, after all,  
Sheehan was the worst victim of the  
system. Impulsively John went over  
to him. Sheehan suddenly seized one  
of John's hands in both his own.  
"Johnny, can't you get me out of this—  
let me off? I'll get out of here—never  
go into politics again, so help me!"

John's heart gave him a wrench as  
he shook his head. "I wish I could,  
Sheehan," he replied honestly. "But  
you're out of my hands now."

He turned away sadly, no sense of  
triumph in his victory.

When he appeared at the door of the  
courthouse some one raised a cheer. It  
passed along from group to group, un-  
til all in the square had joined in a  
short, sharp salute. It was not an hyster-  
ical demonstration, but unusual for  
calm, self-contained New Chelsea. It  
lasted only a few seconds.

"Young man," said Senator Murchell,  
"enjoy this moment. It won't last  
long. You are at your apex—you are  
a hero among your neighbors. But  
they are cheering you, not what you  
said."

"Not me, but what I said. They see  
a principle."

"You're not the first man who has  
held that delusion—to his sorrow."

**CHAPTER IX.**

**Criticism and Wiles.**

**P**EOPLE said that Senator Mur-  
chell maintained his legal  
residence in New Chelsea only  
because an unwritten law re-  
quired each end of the state to be  
represented in the senate, and the va-  
cancy which he had been elected to fill  
had been from the western district.  
This was only half a truth. He really  
liked these men and women among  
whom his youth had been spent, who  
looked upon him half familiarly, half  
in awe, and who, until the late upris-  
ing and the advent of John Dunmende,  
had followed unquestioningly his po-  
litical gospel. Most of the time he  
spent, from the exigencies of his po-  
sition, in Washington or in the big  
house in Adelphi; but as he grew  
older he came to look forward more  
and more eagerly to the summer  
months that supported his "legal resi-  
dence."

He looked, hesitating, toward the old  
colonial house across the street. Then  
he started toward it. Must the habit  
of a lifetime be broken merely be-

cause a son of that house had leveled  
a lance against him? And, besides,  
there was a small matter of business  
to transact. He perceived the figure  
of an old woman on a bench under the  
trees, darning industriously, and he  
smiled at first in amusement. Then  
the smile became gentler.

She looked up as he approached. He  
held out his hand. "Good afternoon,  
Miss Roberta."

"Good afternoon, Will Murchell,"  
she continued her darning. "I'll not  
shake hands," she answered his resis-  
tance calmly. "I don't think I'll ever  
shake hands with you again. John  
says you're a dangerous man. John is  
right."

"I inferred from his speech," he an-  
swered with a twinkle, "that he held  
some such opinion. Were you at the  
trial?"

"I was not. You may sit down,"  
she commanded, making room for him.  
"because I want to ask you a ques-  
tion." He obeyed. "What have you  
been doing to Hugh and our John?  
This house has been like a funeral  
ever since these trials began. Hugh  
has been as grumpy as a dog with  
a boil. And John—he doesn't say  
much, but he feels it. It's this politics!"

"I wish," she concluded vehemently, "a  
plague'd carry off all you politicians."

"But, Roberta, who'd run the coun-  
try?"

Miss Roberta sniffed. "I guess the  
country could run itself, better than  
you politicians do."

"So there's coziness between the  
judge and John, eh? I suppose they're  
fallen out over the trials. Naturally,  
John is just a hot-headed idealist,  
while the judge is a practical man."

"A practical man," she sniffed tartly.  
"If you'd been doing for the judge for  
nearly thirty years you wouldn't call  
him that. I guess. Why, he even be-  
lieves that you're going to put him in  
the supreme court."

"And you don't?"

"Of course not! I tell him so, but he  
won't believe me. He's so puffed up  
with his own importance and impor-  
tance he won't listen to sense and tries  
to make his own life miserable."

"Rec'ta," he said abruptly, "try to  
keep John out of politics."

"Because he is lighting you?"

"That," he said sententiously, "might  
be a sufficient reason. But I'm not  
thinking of that. It isn't the game for  
a man of his sort."

"You didn't think of that when you  
believed you could use him. I wish I  
could keep him out. But we Dun-  
medes are set in our opinions. He'll  
go on fighting, now he's started, until  
he breaks himself against your hard-  
ness or becomes—like you."

He got up abruptly and went into  
the house. In the library he found  
Judge Dunmende before his desk,  
scratching away at an opinion. With  
that heavy dignity which he imparted  
even to the smallest actions of life the  
judge gazed Murchell to a seat.

"That son of yours gave me some-  
thing of a surprise to-day. Looks as  
though Sheehan would have to go over  
the road. Unless," Murchell added in-  
quiringly, "there's a chance to win on  
appeal?"

"No. John tried his case carefully.  
There were no errors."

"Er—about what ought to be the  
sentence, do you think?"

It would not be correct to say that  
the judge assumed a judicial air; that



"Think over the Sheehan case—think it over."

consciously, he always wore. It merely  
became heavier. "What should you  
suggest?"

Murchell made a slight motion with  
his hand to indicate that any sugges-  
tion from him was a negligible matter,  
and answered, "Would four months be  
too much?"

"It is not. One must remember, of  
course, that four months for Sheehan  
would be a heavier sentence than a  
year for another." The judge cleared  
his throat. "I'll take it under consid-  
eration."

A queer smile softening the lines of  
his mouth the senator sat staring at the  
portrait of Thomas Dunmende. "John,"  
he said at last, "made a good speech,  
eh, judge?"

"The elocution was good," was the  
carefully considered answer. "But to  
think a Dunmende should voice such  
rabid radicalism, such wild sentiment-  
alities! John's course will not affect  
the matter we discussed last winter.  
Will it?"

"You mean the justice-ship? My in-  
fluence in the organization is a little  
uncertain just at present. Those trials  
haven't helped either."

"I have that also against my son,"  
the judge said anxiously. "He has made  
it more difficult for his father to realize  
a lifelong ambition. Besides," he ad-  
ded, "attracting my best friend. He is  
too selfish and set in his opinions to  
consider his father's interest. He  
doesn't get it from me. He is," the  
judge concluded, "his mother's son."

The senator did not smile. "His  
mother's son?"

He was not a sentimental man. He  
did not "love the memory" of Anne  
Dunmende nor indulge in sweetly and  
retrospection. He thought of her now  
merely as marking one stage of his  
development. He remembered her as  
a gentle yet high spirited thing full of  
ardent enthusiasms and with an un-  
shakable belief—it struck him now as  
almost pathetic—in the goodness of her  
fellows and the ultimate triumph of  
"the right." There must have been, he  
thought, unsuspected possibilities—pos-  
sibilities that had not been realized—in  
him since he could love this woman.  
He was far from ready to admit that  
their realization would have been prof-  
itable.

"His mother's son. I guess that ex-  
plains him," he rose. "About that  
justice-ship—I'll see what can be done.  
But I promise nothing definitely so far  
ahead. You understand that?"

"Certainly," the judge assented.  
"But I expect you to do your best. I  
feel," he added with dignity, "that my  
services to my country and to my party  
warrant my expectation. And I  
ought to draw the old soldier vote to  
the ticket."

"And, judge," Murchell concluded,  
"think over the Sheehan sentence—  
think it over." He went out of the  
room.

On the next Saturday morning James  
Sheehan, found guilty of conspiracy to  
falsify election returns, was summoned  
to bar and sentenced to four months  
"hard labor" in the county workhouse.  
But before the appeal which he took  
had been refused by the higher court he  
had left Benton county for parts un-  
known.

John sought refuge in the clubhouse  
that Benton county provides for its  
district attorneys. With a sense of re-  
lief he fled away his notes on the  
Sheehan case in a cabinet marked  
"Finished Business." Then he threw  
himself into a chair and began to take  
stock.

Sheehan's eyes haunted him. John  
was a normal young man, and he was  
capable of knowing the joy of a task  
well done. But not this sort of task!  
He could find no elation in a triumph  
won at the cost of direct personal mis-  
ery to others. There was Slayton, for  
example, a handsome, pleasant young  
man who looked the criminal not at  
all. He had not had the courage to  
stand trial, and he had broken bail and  
fled, leaving a sick wife. She and the  
child born since the father's flight now  
lay together in a grave. Slayton had  
not dared to return. Perhaps he did  
not even know of the double tragedy.  
In his dreams John often saw Slayton's  
hunted face as it must now appear.

He became conscious that his head  
was aching, that he was tired all over,  
every nerve in his body throbbing. For  
more than six months, ever since his  
election, he had been working incess-  
antly, feverishly toward this day. The  
release from strain allowed his mal-  
treated, protesting body to be heard.  
He got up and left the office, as though  
fleeing from the problem.

He laid a roundabout course away  
from Main street out into the country.  
He tramped determinedly along the  
pike, filling his lungs with the tonic  
air. It had been a good "growing sea-  
son." His way took him between  
fields of clean young corn and barley  
and oats and occasional cool, green  
wood lots.

A farmer, driving a pair of heavy  
farm horses doing duty as the tongue  
of a squeaky spring wagon, rattled up  
behind him.

"Howdy, John! Want a lift?"

"Howdy, Bill! No, thank you. Just  
taking a little exercise and soaking in  
all this."

Cranshaw reined in his team. John  
stopped.

"Little mite too smart for 'em today,  
weren't ye?"

"They had been so bold, they made  
it easier."

Cranshaw nodded. "Be smarter next  
time, I reckon—I've give 'em a chance.  
'F we give 'em a chance," he repeated  
reflectively. "Us farmers, we're feelin'  
pry good about these trials. Feel  
like we didn't make any mistake last  
fall."

"Murchell says you forget," John  
smiled back.

"Be'n at ye 'ready, has he? Cran-  
shaw asked shrewdly. "He'll be at  
ye harder, before ye're through. Ye  
got 'em scared. Mebbe we'll fergit 'n  
then mebbe we won't. But I guess  
that's our lookout, not yours. So fur's  
ye're concerned, all ye got to do is go  
ahead an' try to finish up the job ye've  
started. 'F we don't do our part, I  
guess we won't have nobody to blame  
but ourselves."

"The question is, am I big enough  
for the job?"

"No, that ain't the question. Cran-  
shaw contradicted quickly. "Be-  
cause that can't be answered till ye've  
tried. The question is, are ye goin' to  
be scared out by a job because it's big,  
or are ye goin' to keep up what ye've  
started? 'F ye do it, there ain't any-  
body else to do it. An' we'll soon be  
back where we started."

John nodded slowly. Cranshaw did  
not pursue the point.

"I see Steve Hampden's back," he  
remarked casually. "That girl o' his  
was at the trial. Came in late an' had  
will it?"

to stand up the door where I was  
standin'. She was with some young  
city feller. Seen her at the rally last  
fall too. She seems," he grinned quizz-  
ically, "to take considerable interest in  
ye. So long!"

Soon he was out of sight around a  
turn in the road.

John swung rapidly along for an hour  
until the sweat oozed from every pore  
of his body. Then he threw himself  
under a tree by the roadside.

He pondered his problem. Yet he  
knew that it was answered, not by Bill  
Cranshaw's homely wisdom, but by  
the inscrutable purpose of the force  
which had impelled him into the fight.

He could not withdraw from the task  
to which he had been set. Whither?  
Was a question that he needed not to  
answer, so long as a straight piece of  
road lay ahead. He thought sadly of  
his father's displeasure. And he  
thought of Katherine, whom it ap-  
peared the winter had not taught to  
forget him. He had not learned to for-  
get. Work could dull it, could not  
wholly stifle, the longing for her. And  
yet he had not been unhappy. He  
knew that he could not say no to that  
which was calling him into service.

He walked home through the calm of  
sundown. At the corner where stands  
the Farmers' bank he met Warren  
Blake and a companion. Warren  
stopped him to introduce the stranger.  
Half a lanky, endearing individual  
who was the author of a much criti-  
cized novel, "The Brethren."

"I heard you twisting Murchell's tail  
this afternoon," Halg drawled. "If  
you don't mind, I'd like to congratulate  
you on your nerve. I've been wonder-  
ing whether you are merely a brave  
man or a specimen of that splendid  
genus, the fool. Brother Blake inclines  
to the latter opinion."

"Yes, Warren would," John smiled.  
"I do," said Warren solemnly. "I  
don't believe in agitation. It hurts  
business—and the artifice."

"In New Chelsea, Mr. Halg, we daily  
offer thanks for prosperity, good worth  
and the old party."

Halg's eyes again broadened as he  
placed a hand on Warren's shoulder.  
"Here, Mr. Dunmende, but for the  
grace of God, stand I. My people  
wanted to make me a banker."

"A dollar, Mr. Halg," John put in.  
"held close enough to the eye will hide  
the rest of creation."

Halg chuckled. "Now, that's good.  
That's very good. Wish I could have  
thought of it."

"As we put it in New Chelsea, are  
you leaving soon, Mr. Halg?" asked  
John.

"Lord, no! I'm here for my health.  
Doctor told me I'd been working too  
hard or not hard enough, I forget  
which, and that I needed fresh air for  
my liver. So I tramped up here after  
the Hamplens, where, by the way,  
Brother Blake and I are dining this  
evening."

"Yes, and we'd better start," Warren  
suggested patiently.

"Ah, these very lovers! Come around  
and see me, Mr. Dunmende."

John promised, and they parted.

He reached home to be soundly scolded  
by Miss Roberta for his tardiness at  
supper. After supper he strolled into  
the library. The judge was reading  
by the desk, the light from the lamp  
throwing his cold, heavy features into  
sharp relief. He looked up inhospi-  
tably as John entered.

"Busy, judge?" John generally called  
him judge, feeling not without reason  
that his father took more pride in  
his office than in his paternity. Of  
late he had had especial reason for  
this belief.

"Not too busy if you have anything  
of importance to discuss. I suppose  
you expect me to put you on the back  
because you've sent another man on  
the road to prison?"

"I have felt that you weren't in full  
sympathy with it."

"I am not." The judge laid his book  
on the desk and sat stiffly erect. John  
was immediately enabled to sympa-  
thize with those unfortunates who  
were arraigned before his father.

"Now that the case is ended, I may  
speak frankly. As a judge I, of course,  
approve of the punishment of crime.  
But I don't approve your going out of  
your way to attack your party and  
Senator Murchell, a fine, clean living  
gentleman, who has always showed  
the warmest friendship for your fam-  
ily." Judge Dunmende spoke with re-  
strained emphasis.

"And has created a pernicious ma-  
chine," John added incautiously.

"Which elected you to the office you  
now hold."

"Your memory isn't good, judge.  
The machine nominated me. The peo-  
ple of Benton county elected me, you  
may remember."

"You couldn't have been nominated  
without Murchell's indorsement."

"That, I'm sorry to say, is probably  
true," John said, wishing that he had  
not ventured into the room. "I'm sor-  
ry you feel so about it. Good night,  
father."

Judge Dunmende resumed his book.  
Now, the judicial temperament is not  
given to impulse. But as John went  
slowly out of the room Judge Dun-  
mende experienced a novel sensation  
which in the brief moment allowed for  
reflection he was at loss to define.  
Late he decided that it was his gen-  
erous nature asserting itself to give  
his son another chance. He may have  
been mistaken.

Be that as it may, before John had  
passed quite out of the room he was  
recalled by an unexpected "Wait."

He returned. "Yes, father?"

"I suppose," said the judge gruffly,  
"your father's interest can have no  
weight with you. It ought to be clear  
to you without suggestion from me that  
if you persist in attacking Senator  
Murchell you make my lifelong ambi-  
tion impossible."

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