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HIS RISE TO POWER

CHAPTER XVI.
A Deserted Jordan.

THE consternation in the royal
palace was great when the
news came that the tele-
graphed stronghold had fallen.
The Michigan had won into the Steel
City.
Two men were scrambling over each
other, turning the state upside down,
because each lustred for power and
hated the other. Victory by either, if
one might judge by the past, meant
corruption, thievery, oppression, in-
justice, and it would be won for him
by characteristic means. The people
knew it.

Between the two camps wandered a
lonely voice, preaching honesty, de-
cency, liberty, equity. He was worthy
to preach. He was the sort of man
to whom other men gladly entrust their
most important private affairs. He
was fitted by capacity, by study, by
ideals, for the pure function of gov-
ernment. He had put aside prefer-
ence, money, love—the trio of rewards
for any one of which men daily sell
their souls—that he might be the fitter
for his task.

And as he went about that spring
preaching his crusade scanty audiences
listened carelessly or with suspici-
on of many deceptions and system-
atic subeducation; let us be just-
indifferently responsive.

John was in the Steel City one night
speaking at a public meeting. He was
often laughed at for proffering old
fashioned oratory in the day of the
ubiquitous newspaper. But it was the
only way in which he could reach the
people, since the columns of the sub-
sidized press were not open to him or
his crusade. He went away from the
hall heavily downcast. The audience
had been small, anything but enthusi-
astic, and he had spoken poorly. There
is no discouragement like unto that of
the man who believes he has a message
to give and knows that he has deliv-
ered it inadequately.

His way to the hotel took him along
the city's principal street. He walked
slowly, scrutinizing the passers-by with
that interest in city throes which the
country bred man never quite loses.
He came to a corner where another
crowded thoroughfare crossed. He
stopped and leaned against the wall of
the bank that stood there.

The theaters were just letting out,
and around him swirled a stream of
humanity, the sound of many voices
and twice as many feet rising in a
peculiar, unmusical roar. John won-
dered as the endless stream of hu-
manity swept by him if it were true,
as Haig had said to him once that
900 men in 1,000 in the cities were
dependent on the thousandth, and that
six men had it in their power to "turn
on a panic," to "put on the screws."
What, if the screws were put on,
would these men do—fight or submit?
But it was not that which made the
load of despondency hang heavier.
Once, seeing a thousand men gathered
in the square at home, he had thought
of the power there, "the power and
the glory." Now he saw the people,
not in their immensity, but in their
infinitesimal multiplicity; so many men
with so many interests, each living in
his own restricted sphere. Was Haig
then right? How could a dreamer or
a thousand dreamers by word of
mouth teach these men to think what
their lives taught them not to feel—
that a social problem was their prob-
lem, that political putrefaction was
their peril, that the masses' interest
was their interest?

He walked on, tortured by doubts,
yet clinging, as the shipwrecked mar-
iner clings to his raft, to his dwindling
faith in the people.
As he was passing through the lobby
of his hotel the clerk motioned him
to the desk. "Say, there's been a big
tough guy in three times tonight ask-
ing for you. Says it's important, and
he'll be back again. Name is Maley.
I guess," he laughed, knowing his
guest, "it's some political hum want-
ing to make a touch."

Butch Maley of New Chelsea, former
"beeler," doubtless, John, curious,
found a seat in the lobby and waited.
He laughed inwardly, not pleasantly,
at the recollections called forth by
the name, which he had almost forgotten.
Butch Maley was the first to be con-
victed in that crusade of nearly six
years ago.
He had not long to wait. Maley was
the same bestial creature who had
stood trembling in the dock and march-
ed away, mouthing imprecations and
large threats, to the penitentiary. That
he was prosperous, the yellow diamond
in his necktie loudly proclaimed. He
rolled toward John, grinning affably.
"Hi, howdy, John?" He did not of-
fer to shake hands for which John
was thankful.
"Hi, how are you, Maley?"
"Me?" Maley drew up a chair and
deposited his huge bulk in it. "Oh,
I'm livin' on No. 1 Easy street. These
here is good times for fellers like me."
With an apparently unconscious ges-
ture he lovingly stroked his paunch.
"Hi, I should say. Same old profes-
sion?"
"I got a half interest in a booze joint.
That's my business. As for professin',
I'm still a statesman. Only yuh'd
have a fine time gittin' the goods on
me now. I learnt," he grinned, "a lot
from yuh. Say, I'm wantin' sump'n."

Maley winked solemnly. "I don't
know nuthin' till I know yuh won't
have him pinched. That's the point—
will yuh have him pinched?"
John thought a moment before re-
plying. "Well, I guess I wouldn't so
long as he stays out of my jurisdic-
tion. I couldn't make him more bar-
ren now by havin' him arrested."

"Then go in the little room back o'
the bar, an' I'll have him with yuh in
no time. He's waitin' not far away."

In a few minutes Maley returned,
leading the fugitive. There was an
embarrassing moment as John rose to
greet the man whom he had broken.
He hesitated, hardly knowing how
to address him. Sheehan's hand started
forward in an uncertain gesture, then
dropped back to his side. On a kind-
ly impulse John held out his. The
other caught it almost eagerly in a
soft, damp clasp.

"I hope you are well, Sheehan."
"I look it, don't I?" The fugitive
gave a half hearted laugh.
John was obliged to confess to him-
self that he did not look it. His
cheeks, once so rubicund, were sallow
and pimply. Flabby pouches had gathered
under his eyes, which were fur-
tively restless, as though continually
on the watch for some pursuer. He
was fatter than ever. But whereas
his stomach had formerly been the
graceful roundness of semi-active pros-
perity, it had now become a paunch-
like unto Maley's own.

"Sit down," said Maley hospitably.
"an' have a drink on me."
John sat down, but declined the
drink. Sheehan and Maley ordered
whisky. The drink seemed to restore
to Sheehan a part of his nerve. With-
out further preliminaries he blurted
out, "I want to go back."
John waved his hand and remarked,
"The railroads are still running," a
pleasantry that seemed lost on Sheehan.
"It's that cursed sentence that's
troubling me."
"Tha's nuthin'," Maley interposed
cheerfully. "It's only four months in

the workhouse. I got a year in the
pen." His tone might have led one to
believe him boasting of a distinction.
"I should think," said John gravely,
"you would find it almost a relief to
have it served and over."

"So I would," answered Sheehan,
with an emphatic sincerity that was
not to be doubted. "But I've got a
family."

"A little late to think of them, isn't
it?" The sentence would have to be
served."

John shook his head. "Besides, I'll
not be district attorney much longer,
and my successor mightn't be com-
plaisant."

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know nuthin' till I know yuh won't
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