The SWING of the BALANCE

"SO it has come—without warning," Mrs. Ellerby said.

Ellerby, deep-sunk in his chair on the opposite side of the hearth, his white brows in a knotted tangle over his keen black eyes, was ominously silent.

Their son had just informed them of his engagement to a girl wholly unknown to them, but possessed, according to his fervid insistence, of the combined virtues and graces of any half dozen young women of their acquaintance. He had taken for granted their happiness in his happiness and had gone whistling blithely off to bed.

"If she is only half that he believes her!" his mother anxiously exclaimed.

Both she and Ellerby, as well as the fine old house in which they dwelt so pridefully, bore every testimonial to the deliberately fastidious system whereby they had arranged their lives. That they should be expected thus suddenly to depart from their fixed habits and swing wide all the doors of their hearts and of the old house alike to a complete stranger, who came without herald or credential, was staggering.

Ellerby arose and, leaning against the mantel, looked at his wife as if taking the measure of her invulnerability.

"Celia Kerr," she murmured. "It is a pleasant enough name."

"Does it occur to you to connect her with the notorious 'Policy' Kerr?" he asked, his voice tense. "She is his daughter."

The dignified room and the small, stately woman seemed to protest together, in a moment of violent silence.

"Dick doesn't know this," Ellerby hastened. "Few do. To his suburban neighbors John Ames Kerr is, no doubt, a modest and exemplary citizen, bearing no connection whatever with the former kingpin gambler. I stumbled upon his secret by the merest chance. He threw over his policy shops several years ago—he certainly didn't need any more money—and the protection of one administration after another has given him a knowledge that makes him an unseen force in city affairs. But his downtown life is all under cover. Dick could know nothing of that."

"I can't make it thinkable!" she breathed, quivering under the severest blow life had yet dealt her.

"We will do what we can," he comforted, "but I'm afraid it will be hard to make the boy see that he ought to give her up."

"Give her up! Did you ever know an Ellerby to give up the woman he loved? We need not waste time with Dick. You must deal directly with this man Kerr. Let him understand that he must get the girl out of the way. If she could go abroad for a year or two it might be well. You will know how to arrange it," she said, with a boundless faith in his ability to do anything she wished, a faith built on the solid foundation of his financial and political success. In all their years together he had never failed her, and the seeming ease with which he got for her all that she demanded had fostered her belief that no problem of her patrician life was beyond his power of solution.

"Don't expect too much of me, Isabel," he replied. "Kerr isn't an easy man to handle. They say he has been absolutely guiltless of any tactical blunders, that he has never yet entrenched himself in a position from which he could be dislodged, has never made a move without knowing its ultimate end. In all the years he was running his 'skin' game of policy he was as secure as the most white souled saint in town. Is it any wonder that men who are clear above his world sneak up his back stairs for advice? The mouths that could talk loudest are most effectually stopped."

"But surely there is some way to reach him!" she cried, movingly.

"I'll do what I can, but you've no idea how he has kept his tracks covered. Why, in spite of all my acquaintance with municipal affairs and the men back of them, I never learned till a short time ago that he had a daughter. He has kept her abroad most of her life, it seems. He is said to idolize her. If Dick spells happiness to her I'm afraid"—— He stopped with grim significance.

"Mine?" She Repeated Bewilderedly.

"Can you let yourself think of his blood mingling with ours?" she flamed, looking at him through an angry mist, "of his breed overrunning this house of your fathers?"

He sank deeper than ever into his chair. To him, as to her, such a marriage seemed monstrous. Versed from childhood in all the ways which bear on gentle living, anything forbidding was extremely distasteful to him, and this proposed union of his son with the daughter of one of the most notorious men in town burned into his heart and his pride alike. Yet, masterful as he was in all his relationships of life, his attitude suggested a curious half-helplessness, a conviction of disaster.

"I'll see him to-morrow," he said, wearily.

"Suppose," she suggested startlingly, "that I go to the girl instead? It may be more easily managed in that way. And if I fail, you can deal with him."

In the end it was agreed between them.

She found "Policy" Kerr's residence with some difficulty. It lay a half morning's journey from her own door, in a suburb whose quiet but distinctive beauty surprised her almost as much as the beauty of his house itself. As she went in at the gate among the birches and the brown bodied maples the charm of it all filled her. The whole place seemed to have acquired something of the dignity of the great trees themselves. It was of a breath taking loveliness that early spring morning.

"He has had the sense to leave it all to a good architect and an equally good landscape man," she said to herself. "And an excellent interior decorator," she mentally added as she entered a drawing room as repressed and lofty in tone as her own.

A servant appeared after just an instant and asked if she would go upstairs to Miss Kerr's sitting room, explaining that her mistress had suffered a slightly sprained ankle and was forbidden the stairs.

Mrs. Ellerby followed the maid, rather glad than otherwise of the opportunity to see the girl in her own room, for, she argued, nothing so faithfully portrays a woman as the room in which she lives, for the most part alone. The hand of the decorator cannot obliterate her there.

Celia Kerr lay in a wicker chair by an open French window. Beyond her on the balcony was a potted oleander, its exact pink repeated in the creamy smoothness of her cheeks. She wore a crisp white morning gown, and wrists and hands were without jewels. She was very, very pretty, but not at all with the hard, cheap prettiness which her visitor had confidently expected.

A sudden throb of pain for her startled Mrs. Ellerby.

"My son has told me," she said, going forward, her hand extended. "I came at once."

Celia Kerr met the moment charmingly. She was neither restrained nor in the slightest degree awkward, but winningly girlish. And what most surprised Mrs. Ellerby was the perfectly natural way in which she took her for granted, as if no single minute of anxiety had troubled her as to Dick's mother's approval of the engagement.

Was it possible that she did not know herself as "Policy" Kerr's daughter? Mrs. Ellerby was soon convinced that she did not.

She looked at the superb, clean built, clear eyed young creature in veiled amazement. Nature had hidden the blood that was in her. But it was there, a polluted flow that would go on from generation to generation, all contaminatingly. Her mouth set resolutely over the ache in her throat. She had no intention that any grandchild of hers should feel that turgid poison in its veins.

"I wonder," the girl was saying in the softest, prettiest voice, with a little tremulous intake, "if you can have the least idea of what the thought of you means to me? You see, there have only been daddy and me. Just us two—and mother's picture," stretching out a hand to the miniature on the table beside her. "But there has never been mother since I can remember. And now you come. You and Dick. Oh, and of course, Mr. Ellerby, too. Only I've always had such a splendid father I haven't felt the least need, naturally, for another. But, of course, I'm going to like him tremendously. Dick has told me so much about him."

Mrs. Ellerby was apparently an entirely serene figure as she sat there in her soft gray gown, a sprig of lilac in its folds, but in reality her heart was doing most unheard of things in her ordinarily tranquil breast.

"So now you see," Celia went on, with a smile that dug straight into the soul of her, "how I lie here and treasure the idea of you."

Quite without meaning to or knowing that she was going to do it, Isabel Ellerby found herself reaching for the slim young hand. And how could she help it, she demanded later of herself, when the child fixed her with such hungry, luminous eyes?

She did not know what else was said nor how she finally got away, but as she went the sunlight kept making and unmaking before her harassed eyes the picture of the girl's face, while her heart was whipped by the wishful melody of the young voice.

"I must go to her father!" she stammered to herself in goaded haste, some subtle sense telling her it would be better for her to see Kerr than to send her husband. "It would have been impossible to hurt her."

A strangling feeling of loathing for the man was on her as he received her an hour later in his private office. All the imperiousness which so distinguished her was marked in her as she faced him.

He was great bodied, of solid bone and muscle, grim about the mouth and gray about the narrow eyes. Life had taught him nothing so impressively as she had taught him wariness, so that, finding himself confronted by Mrs. Ellerby, he merely awaited the purpose of her visit.

"If your daughter has informed you of her engagement to my son, there can be no doubt in your mind as to what brings me here, Mr. Kerr," she said at once. "I am sure you agree with me that it were folly to permit them to continue to contemplate such a marriage."

A vein began to beat in his temple, but otherwise he showed no sign of agitation or resentment. Placing her a chair he seated himself in the one before his desk and resting his elbows on the arms of it he put the tips of his blunt fingers against each other, studying them rather than her face.

"You will have to explain to me why you consider it folly, Mrs. Ellerby," he suggested.

"You cannot wish me to put into words all the hateful facts of the case!" she cried incredulously. "It is enough to remind you that there are bloods that will not mix—minerals that will not amalgamate!"

One big hand swept his brow for an instant, and as it lowered he looked at her; not with the anger she had expected, but with a simplicity that surprised her. "Aren't you forgetting the alchemy of love?" he asked.

"Love always has the worst of it with shame," she declared unflinchingly. "Nothing but misery could come of such a union. Do you think my son would cherish your daughter once he knew she was your daughter?"

"If he's half the man I think him he would cherish her just that much more. It is the afflicted child the mother loves best—the one life hasn't played quite fair with," he reminded her.

"You are willing to risk more than I. There is nothing for it, believe me, but to take her away until they forget."

"You make it sound very easy, ma'am," he observed grimly.

"I don't pretend they will not be hurt, but time will heal the wounds and in the end each will be happy with a fit mate. There is absolutely no correspondence between them, as you must recognize. Marriage to-day must mean a completeness of union. It must mean uplift—and race betterment," she urged, her delicate face flooded with color.

"Marriage nowadays means about what it always has and always will. I take it—home and shelter and a place to rest in."

He arose and moved over to the window, hands thrust into his pockets, eyes deeply grave.

Celia Kerr Lay in a Wicker Chair.

"It's better to speak plainly," he said in his brusque way. "I am no doubt as bad as you think me, Mrs. Ellerby. I can't hope to change your opinion of me, nor shall I try. I began life, like most men, with sincere intentions. Then I got stirred by the pace about me, and I did what others were doing. I did it more crudely, perhaps. At any rate, while others no better and no worse than I came through clear of censure, I became notorious. It may be I had less taste, less tact. It doesn't matter now. The fact of the thing remains. I'm not trying to excuse myself. I'm trying to make the point that I am not the only father who has jeopardized his child's happiness by adopting questionable methods of getting rich."

Her hands sprang apart in a gesture of impatience. Her eyes were full of scorn.

"You must hear me out!" he urged. "As I was going to say, when it comes to the question of blood, I've noticed that, whether it be blue or red, there run in it pretty much the same ingredients. Justice is even handed." His voice broke unexpectedly and he went on with a gentler tone:—"For instance, there flows in my daughter's veins the sound, sweet blood of her mother. Surely you may trust to that."

He was looking toward his desk, and her glance, following, rested on a duplicate of the picture she had seen upon his daughter's table. The wholesome, fresh colored young face seemed to smile at them reassuringly, the eyes as satisfyingly clear and candid as the eyes of the girl.

"You ask too much!" Mrs. Ellerby cried poignantly. "The hazard is too great. I am pleading for your daughter's happiness as well as my son's."

"Neither you nor I have anything to do with that," he earnestly made answer. "It lies wholly with them."

"What do you propose?" she demanded with finality.

"I propose to do nothing whatever," he answered quietly, "and to see that others concerned do exactly the same thing. For twenty years, day and night, I have been vigilant for my girl and her happiness. I'm not going to fail her now, you may be sure."

"If you refuse to act I must," she said, with a long breath. "They shall not go blindfolded into marriage. I will go back to your daughter and tell her the truth."

"You know her! You have seen her," he cried.

She had the sensation of having been sprung at loudly, of having been gripped roughly by the throat, but her eyes continued to meet his challenging ones coolly.

"I paid your daughter a visit this morning, Mr. Kerr. That I told her nothing my presence here argues, but I shall certainly do so unless you spare her and me the intensely painful ordeal."

"You mean it?" he asked slowly, as if he thought the thing beyond her.

"I mean exactly that," she replied.

"Then you force me to use brutal weapons," he breathed heavily. "I would have spared you if you had let me. It's not my habit to strike a woman."

She faced him with the high carriage of one whose prides and prejudices are of too deep root to be uptorn by any passing storm, however fiercely it may rage.

"You need not hesitate," she said very quietly, "I am not afraid of any blow you can deal me."

He went to a safe in the corner of the room and, opening a small drawer, brought forth a folded slip of paper, holding it in his big fingers.

"From the moment that I first saw your son and my daughter together, Mrs. Ellerby, I couldn't doubt how things would end with them. What I have done was done with the thought of being prepared for just this interview," he explained, moving toward her, a slow reluctance in his manner.

She waited, a touch of curiosity in her fine eyes, nothing more.

"This check which I have here," he began, "is the missing chapter in the traction deal now being probed, as you must know, by a special grand jury. It was written only a few months ago, when everything seemed 'safe.' The city awakened suddenly, you remember, with absolutely no warning. The men to whom this is made payable dared not run the risk of getting it cashed and were about to return it, demanding the actual money in its stead. I bought it. The men who sold themselves have received their money, the men who bought them have the franchise. I hold the check. Only those of whom I bought it know where the check is. The bribers would give several times its face value to get it back. The State's prosecutor has learned of its existence and threatens to put the man who signed it in the penitentiary—if he can find out who he is. The check is yours to destroy on the day that your son and my daughter marry, Mrs. Ellerby."

"Mine?" she repeated bewilderedly. "What possible interest can I have in its fate?"

He opened it and, with that same slow reluctance, as if to the last he would have spared her, held it beneath her eyes. Her husband's name flamed up at her.

He turned away, his rough hewn face distressed and very red. Unimaginative as he was, he knew that, smiting her in her intrenched security, he had wounded her soul, bruised it almost beyond the healing.

In that sharp moment he spoke simply, out of his regret.

"Maybe Nature gave us all pretty much the same kind of fathers, ma'am," his glance touching his wife's picture and then seeking her gallant, piteous face, "but she didn't forget to give us mothers! So don't fret. There's nothing to fret about. What's in your boy's veins and in the veins of my girl, runs in the blood of all mankind. It's the same mixture with the same saving ingredients. They've got their chance for happiness, for making good, and," his face softening incredibly, "I'm banking on them."

James E. Watson and His Wonderful Animal Memory Hall

MEMORY for faces! Well, James E. Watson, of Indiana, who led the Taft forces at the Republican Convention in Chicago, has a wonderful system that makes him automatically salute men, women and children, no matter how long ago he met them. Here is the secret of his successful feats of friendly recollection laid bare.

It didn't take that army of one thousand delegates long to become acquainted with the tall, long haired, sweeping figure chosen to lead the cohorts of the President when he went among them calling them by their Christian names, applying good natured abbreviations or addressing them with some appellation suggestive of the State they represented. The moment this commanding looking man was "unhitched" and turned loose in that crowded pasture of humanity he began to romp over the place like a frisky colt. Right and left he shot his long arms, leaving behind him many reddened hands from the vigorous handshakes he executed. Then there was a lane of smiling faces backed up with gladdened hearts in his wake. The high tension voltage of personal magnetism that he possesses flashed out like heat lightning, harmless but brightening.

The Convention had been grinding along in a slow and almost stupid manner until this whirlwind of "six feet three" put in an appearance. It was waiting for just such a man, a Moses to lead the way. From a dull, uneasy mass meeting the Convention was transformed into something resembling an "Old Home Week" at the county fair grounds. Folk began to call one another by their "real names," being careful to drop the "Mister."

The throngs in the galleries were asking, "Who is this fellow that is acting like a composite ring master, floor walker, strike leader and parade grand marshal?" They didn't catch his name when it was sounded through the megaphone on the platform. They had to wait for the newspapers the next morning. Not so with the delegates. Before an hour elapsed every man jack of them in both the Taft and third term forces knew the name and something about this leader, Mr. James E. Watson.

"Our Jim" they call him in Rushville, Ind., from which he hails.

"Hello, there, Buckeye Bill!" he would shout over the heads of a delegation. "Look like you didn't have a wink of sleep last night. By George, I couldn't get a room myself. Made a dicker with a chauffeur, though, and slept in a taxicab outside the hotel. Saved money at that, even if the meter did fly around at a two-forty clip."

Immediately he had the attention of every one in his hearing. An old trick, but one of the "arts of leadership."

"How are you, Colonel?" he would ask, throwing his long arms around the neck of a silver haired and bearded veteran from Connecticut. "Saw you last night in the hotel. Remarked to a friend how much you looked like my friend 'Uncle Joe' Cannon. You'd make a great pair, you fellows would."

With these and like remarks he won the "undying friendship and support" of the men he addressed. They had been singled out and recognized by the floor leader. It means a lot when a fellow is away from home and feeling lonesome. Watson's training in this line is well grounded and dates back twenty years. He is still in his forties, but as an organizer and leader has had wide experience. For more than six years he was the republican "whip" in the lower house of Congress. In that capacity he led the republican forces in passing many measures. He saw that they were on hand and in their seats voting when important questions were to be decided. He was obliged to know some time in advance the sentiment of the republican contingent on proposed bills. If he could not rally enough strength in his own camp he arranged for a postponement on the bearing of the bills and sought out supporters in the democratic stronghold.

JAMES E. WATSON

His was an arduous lot. A shrewd organizer, resourceful, a finished parliamentarian and a brilliant orator, he was well fitted for his duties. Aside from these assets he had another qualification all important for leadership. In politics he is considered the peer of "good mixers." It was this quality that recommended him to the Taft forces at Chicago.

Watson possesses a remarkable memory. He says it is the result of experiment and training. He seldom forgets a name; never a face. To a friend he once confided how he remembers names and faces. Whenever he is introduced to a person he repeats the name over and over again in his mind. Every man suggests something to him. He may look like another friend, some public man, some character in fiction or the drama, or he may have a resemblance to some animal. This may sound far-fetched, but Watson declares it is so. Some men by peculiar lines of their faces or formation of their heads suggest to him a fox, parrot, owl, cow, deer, dog or what not. To him some men have eyes like rats, long necks like swans, ears like a gorilla, and other "zoological attributes." If you ever met this man Watson there is no telling that he did not register you in his "memory hall" after this fashion:—

"Thompson, Thompson, Thompson, Thompson, Thompson, Thompson—Chicago, Chicago, Chicago—owl, owl, owl, owl—Thompson, Chicago, owl."

And then for the life of you you would not be able to understand how he called your name "right off the bat" when he met you in some other city a year or more later.

"I surely made an impression upon him," you say to yourself. Then, in truth, the "deadly work" of flattery has been done.

Watson has had a picturesque career. He was born in Winchester, Ind., and was graduated from De Pauw University. At school he had for a classmate Albert J. Beveridge, later United States Senator from Indiana. They were rivals at school because both were acknowledged orators of exceptional ability. In the contest for "class orator" at their graduation Watson voted out over Beveridge. Although associated in many political battles in after years and both working for the cause of the same party in the same locality, they were never good friends again.

Leaving school, Watson went in for the law. He had just passed his majority when he was selected as a delegate to the State Convention at Indianapolis. There he came under the notice and won the admiration of John E. Gowdy, State chairman, who was afterward Consul General to Paris for eight years. Gowdy induced Watson to move from Winchester to Rushville, where he promised to train him "right under his wing." Watson consented. Gowdy was a politician of the type now almost extinct. He believed in such methods as breaking into singing "Marching Through Georgia," or a like martial air, when there was a critical situation in a convention and "his side" was about to lose a point. Watson proved an apt pupil under his leadership. That is why he still employs the old fashioned ideas in present day politics, and by the same token they appear to be as effective as ever they were.

At that time the Sixth Congressional district, where Rushville is situated, was hopelessly democratic. Gowdy had Watson nominated on the republican ticket for Congress, and they started out on a campaign that is history in Indiana. One locality in the district, a German settlement in the hills of two counties, was "black" with democrats. The handful of republicans there were never allowed to go to the polls to vote. The democratic campaign managers never thought of electioneering in that section. It was absolutely safe and could be depended upon to roll up the usual plurality for the election returns.

Gowdy and Watson had an idea. The next few days and nights found Watson "brushing up" on his German. He memorized a speech in that language and recalled a few old German songs he sang at school. With a Weberfieldian make-up, wooden shoes and all, Watson entered the Teutonic stronghold and began an earnest campaign. He conducted crossroads meetings and made speeches in places where they never had a political demonstration before. He told them how they were being "misrepresented" at Washington instead of having a man that stood for their rights; how their money was being wasted at the capital, and how the country was going to the demnition bowwows in general. His work bore fruit. He was elected to Congress by a narrow margin. Before the next campaign rolled round Watson and Gowdy were instrumental in having the Sixth, or "Old Burnt" district gerrymandered and made safely republican. Watson was sent back to Congress from 1895 to 1903, when he stepped aside to become the candidate for Governor. The present incumbent, Governor Thomas R. Marshall, defeated him in that election.

In Congress Watson soon became the "right bower" of "Uncle Joe" Cannon, who was then the Speaker. It was through his influence that he was made "whip of the House." They became inseparable companions and toured the country together in subsequent campaigns. Both used the same political tactics—the tactics of the old school. On one occasion "Uncle Joe" declared Watson was the most eloquent man in Washington in either house.

Since his defeat for the Governorship Watson has divided his time practicing law and touring the country as a Chautauqua lecturer. He is the ideal of the folk in Rushville and Hancock county. There he not only knows the name of every man, woman and child, but the names of their dogs and horses. He sings in the Methodist choir and plays on the "fiddle" and piano.

And he is still a young man!