JOHN BURT

By FREDERICK UPHAM ADAMS

Author of "Mr. Pickwick," "Jerry Cruncher," etc.

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CHAPTER XXVII—Continued.

"Well, I'm willing to share, treble! I mean I was tickled to death if I said you could have twenty dollars' proof. That ten thousand dollars meant the world of comfort to me. Five hundred bonus, an' all I had to do was to reach my vote for the chairman! Why I guess at that money an' thought how it would look on my bank book, sort o' said to him, 'Mr. Morris,' says I 'I'm your man.' An' then, mind you, at once it was to make money here in this town! Why, I'd made a deal with him by which I was to buy up all the other houses an' sell 'em over to him, same as if they were a lot of cigars or bags of potatoes. Then we drew up an agreement to vote for the chairman to run on ticket for Mr. Morris. Here, Mr. Chairman, is the duly certified copy of that contract. Part of the money was in cash an' the rest in a certified check, an' I have brought it here for your inspection. The will note that it is signed by Mr. Arthur Morris and drawn on his bank.

"Now, Mr. Chairman, an' members of the committee, I'm ready to stand by nursing and facing his astonished inquiries, 'Why, John Burt, you've have changed my mind about voting for Chairman Morris.' My lawyer tells me I don't have to keep this secret, mind with Mr. Morris, an' I'm going to sacrifice that ten thousand dollars my' this ten thousand more which would have been rightfully mine—to denounce yaas. Acting on the advice of my lawyer I'm willing to turn this money over to you, with the certified check and the agreement we signed. Thankin' you for your kind attention to this matter, I remain, I vote no."

A scene of wildest confusion followed. Men of the members were on their feet demanding recognition. The chairman pounded his gavel into splinters in a vain attempt to restore order. Two members simultaneously rose and Alderman Hendricks secured recognition from the chair.

"In view of the remarkable statements made by my colleague," he said, "I move a postponement of the vote, and the appointment of a committee to investigate these curious charges."

There were vociferous protests, and the chair ruled that the vote must proceed. Bailey of the Gazette was accosted with Sam Rounds so fortunately at the changes made, and deposited the bribery money with the chairman. Realizing that defeat was inevitable, staff of the Gazette surrounding Alderman Hendricks recorded their votes instead of the contract, a motion to adjourn was declared passed, and the excited mob poured into the corridors.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Love of a Man for a Woman.

It was not the fault of the chef or of the service that Arthur Morris did not enjoy his dinner. Jessie's beauty, which once charmed him, now inspired him with jealous rage. For Blake he felt unalloyed hatred, and for Gen. Carden a contempt which he did not try to conceal. He was in a sullen mood all the morning, when he hoped to crush Jessie Blake to a contrite submission. He prayed the time for the second's decision might be brought to him at dinner.

As he brooded a messenger boy approached and handed Morris an envelope.

"Ah! I presume this is it!" he exclaimed. He adjusted his monocle with painful assiduity, broke the seal and read:

"Dear Mr. Morris: The Cosmopolitan Ironclads were defeated by a friendly amalgamation of Blake's crew and six others charge you with bribery. Friendly amalgamation certified check. Am on my way to the Hoffman House. Meet me there at once. Yours, Jessie Blake."

The note fell from the spectator's hand and fluttered to the floor. His face whitened with spasms, but no words came to his lips.

"Say anyone, boss?" The pleasing voice of the messenger boy broke the silence, cap in hand, recalling him to himself.

"No," he said pushing his chair from the table and rising unsteadily to his feet. "I'm going. Good-night!"

"Good-night, sir!" the boy demanded his gratuity.

"Gratuity! Go to the var, damn you! Pay the boy! Blunt!" and he rushed out of the dining room.

Blake picked up the note and read it into pieces. He knew the purport of the messenger's message, caused the precipitate departure of Arthur Morris and he did not disclose it.

"Some important, Wall street matter, I suppose," he ventured, in answer to the inquiring glances of his guests.

"Blake, expression positively frightened me!" said Bettie. "Did you so like to see Mr. Morris go? Did you read that note? It must have been important indeed. Perhaps his father is dead?"

"The impending crisis of Wall street fed the flames of James Morris' wrath," he said. According to the telegram he had laid down his dinner to run out to arrive in New York in a few days. He was a thousand miles away for the exposure of his duplicity to one for his success. Only a lonely seaboard shed his hopes surmount his fears. He instinctively felt that Jessie knew and confessed them one by one. One chance remained—he must conquer Jessie, by unbeatitating acceptance, and a hasty marriage. Jessie was a woman, a shaded river in the current, and turmoil of the coming battle.

"Women have been wan in a day," he mused, "and by knight ere two morrow night! Impossible! I'll propose to her to-night! Her acceptance means the will accept me. Then, as immediate consequence, I'll have the money. Why should that not win? It's got to win! I'll make it win!"

Thus argued James Blake during a long, lonely meditation. This was worthy of his reckless nature. He could not turn back. Behind, the shade of burning bridges was behind him; the river in the current, the turmoil of the coward march.

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"Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!" Jessie's face, cheeks flushed, the tears of her heart by storm, and bear her away in the current, and turmoil of the coming battle