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THE COMMONWEALTH.

E. E. HILLIARD, Editor and Proprietor. "EXCELSIOR" IS OUR MOTTO. VOL. XVI. New Series--Vol. 4. SCOTLAND NECK, N. C., THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 1900. NO. 46. SUBSCRIPTION PRICE \$1.00. SEND YOUR ADVERTISEMENT IN NOW.

THE EDITOR'S LEISURE HOURS.

Points and Paragraphs of Things Present, Past and Future.

The rapid rate at which the paper demand is consuming wood pulp indicates that at no distant day the forests of this country will be greatly devastated. There never has been such a demand for paper and the consumption increases largely every year. The consumption of paper material by the newspapers of the country is something enormous.

Let those who wish and will, spend their time speculating about the political situation now and what it will be four years hence. But THE COMMONWEALTH suggests that there will be time enough for us all to get in line time enough to vote again after we have given three solid years to our immediate business. Let us all get down to business and work. Yes, let us work. There is no need for idlers. Every living mortal with good health and an opportunity ought to have some kind of employment.

Out upon idlers, loafers, loungers, gadabouts, gossips and tale-bearers. Everlasting diligence at something is the best motto.

The press of the State is in a suggestive mood since the election. Almost every quill-driver is ready with a wise suggestion about business and labor. It is rather strange that many people follow the lead of the newspapers they believe in with implicit confidence concerning matters political, but will not do it in other matters. Many times the undecided voter waits to make up his mind according to the advice of his favorite newspaper; and oftener than not the paper leads him right.

Now, the papers give just as good advice about business and farming and such like as they do about political matters. Then why not follow them?

The South's potentiality, in which THE COMMONWEALTH has great faith and of which it has repeatedly spoken, is well described in the following, reproduced from the New York Commercial in the Manufacturers' Record: "Nearly every State in the South is a great producer of raw materials, and every Southern State sends away many millions of dollars annually for manufactures that might be made by itself or its neighbors. In one item of furniture and woodenware the South might easily make an enormous saving every year to utilize the products of her own forests. Her workable woods grow in great variety, and they should not be shipped to distant States only to be returned in manufactured shapes for Southern consumption at greatly-enhanced prices.

"The South produces practically every constituent that enters into commercial fertilizers, yet she continues to put the great bulk of these—and her consumption of them is enormous—in outside States.

"Nearly every freight train and steamship that moves southward carries thither vast quantities of canned fruits, vegetables and other food products, of which the South is a great consumer, and of which she might easily become a great packer were she minded to utilize her own resources to the limit.

"Her vegetable fibers, most of which now go to waste, have in them great possibilities for wealth-making. American upholsterers actually import whole cargoes of 'African grass' and other fibers that are inferior to the lowly saw palmetto for mattresses and furniture. And a textile fabric as fine and as light as silk, and much more durable and cheap, can be made from the prickly leaf of the pineapple plant. For warm-weather gowns the women-folk of the entire country would welcome it and pay most liberally for it, yet the pineapple leaf dries up and rots in the plantation furrows.

"And so the story might proceed. The movement of manufacturing in the South is still in its infancy. Where it has begun at all, it is almost without exception successful. The figures of the twelfth census will be a revelation in this particular, and they ought to prove a stimulus to greater achievement in the richly-endowed section."

When you want prompt acting little pills that never gripe use DeWitt's Little Early Risers. E. T. Whitehead & Co.

MASTER JAMES HORN.

THE HERO PAGE NO. 7.

Senate Bill 578.

Brand Whitlock In Saturday Evening Post. He was a page in Illinois Legislature—"House Page No. 7," the bright metal badge on the lapel of his coat said—and all day long he heard nothing but "Here, boy!" from city members, or "Hey, bub!" from country members, or "Hi, there kid!" from the other pages, or "Get a move on you, Seyen!" as the chief page snapped his fingers at him in his lordly way. His real name was James, but he never heard that, now that his father was dead. His mother called him Jamie.

Jamie was kept very busy and yet he enjoyed his legislative duties. He felt that it was a big thing to help, even in his humble little way, to make laws for all the people in the State. It was pretty important, for instance, to carry a paper from some member up to the clerk's desk, for after the clerk had read it, on three different days, and the House had voted on it and passed it, and after it had been read on three different days and passed by the Senate, and after the Governor had read it and thought over it as he walked back and forth between the Executive Mansion and the State House, and had written his name on it, it became a law, and everybody in the State had to obey it or go to jail.

The people were called constituents; they seemed to be divided up amongst all the members of the Legislature; everybody in the State House had his constituents. Jamie felt that, as a legislator, he should have some constituents, but he couldn't decide who his constituents were, and he didn't like to ask anybody. But finally he thought of his mother, and when he told her that she was his constituent she took his little face between her two hands and kissed him and pressed her cheek to his. Her cheek was moist with tears.

If everybody in the State House had been as good to his constituents as Jamie, Illinois would have been a very happy place in which to live. When his father died, Jamie's mother had to take in sewing and to work hard to keep things going. She was sad much of the time, and always looked tired, and this made Jamie sad. He longed to help her but he did not know what to do. Then a friend of theirs, Mr. Woodbridge, said he could get Jamie a place in the House as a page boy—they always say "page boy" in the Legislature—and one morning Jamie's mother dressed him in his Sunday suit and sent him up to the State House with Mr. Woodbridge.

And so he became a page. He was paid a dollar and a half a day. Every twenty days the pay-rolls were made out, and Jamie would go down to the Treasury, sign his name in a big, round hand, "James Horn," and then proudly take home to his mother thirty dollars in fresh, crisp, green bills! His mother had wished him to stay in school, but of course, being a page was better than going to school. There were no books to study, and then you got out so much earlier every day! And more than all, you could not take home money from school!

The House met every morning at ten o'clock, and after the Speaker had taken his place under the canopy where the beautiful flag was draped, and had rapped for order, and the chaplain had prayed, the clerk would call the roll for introduction of bills. This was Jamie's busiest time. Everybody would have bills to introduce or petitions from his constituents to present, and for an hour Jamie would be scampering up and down the aisles between the members' desks and the clerk's desk. But after that he had a breathing spell, and could sit on the Speaker's steps and whisper to the Speaker's page, or look about over the House and watch the members. There were gray members from the country districts with long whiskers and steel-bowed spectacles, there were city members with fancy vests and diamonds, there were Irish members and German members, there was a Polish member named Kumaszyński, and there was a negro member, who sat away back on the Republican side almost under the galleries, and was very quiet, and wore black clothes and gold eyeglasses.

But there was one whom Jamie liked above all the others. He was tall, with smiling blue eyes that saw everything, and though his black hair was patched with gray at the temples, to Springfield on the Monday afternoon train instead of waiting for the

"YIELDING to the persuasion of my dealer, I changed chill tonics and tried ROBERTS' and found it the best I ever used." W. H. Coppow, Jamesville, N. C., to the Roberts Drug Co., Suffolk, Va., Aug. 14, 1899. Price 25c. Get the kind with a red cross on label.

his face was that of a young man, clean-shaven and ruddy. He was a Chicago member and the most fashionably-dressed man in the House—he wore a different suit of clothes every day. He was a lawyer and his name was Bronson Meredith. Jamie loved him the first time he ever saw him, and whenever Mr. Meredith clapped his hands Jamie would spring to his side before any other page had started, and if by chance Mr. Meredith ever gave a resolution or a bill to any of the other boys Jamie felt a twinge of jealousy at his heart.

Sometimes he would loiter an instant beside Mr. Meredith's desk, and a smile from him made Jamie happy all that day. Jamie longed to touch him with his hand but dared not. The only thing he could do was to pat Mr. Meredith's overcoat, with its soft, silken lining, as it hung on his hook in the cloakroom. At night, lying in his bed, Jamie would close his eyes and see Mr. Meredith standing beside his desk, his lips slightly parted in a smile, showing his white teeth and replying so sharply to members who interrupted him that they would shoot down into their seats with red faces and all the other members would laugh, while Mr. Meredith, raising his hand, would go on with his speech, saying:

"Now, Mr. Speaker, as I was about to remark when I yielded to the perplexing question of the distinguished gentleman from Pike—"

Mr. Meredith was not often on his feet, as they say in legislative bodies, but when he took part in a debate all the other members kept still and listened with their hands behind their ears, while he spoke. Mr. Meredith was a leader—many called him a reformer. Jamie decided that when he grew up he would be a lawyer, a leader and a reformer.

Now, when the session was about over there was a bill in the House which almost all the Chicago members hoped to see made into a law; but Mr. Meredith was against it. The country members, too, for the most part were against the bill, and Jamie noticed that when it first came over from the Senate there was a stir in the House, and that every time it came up, after that, all the members would rush in from the cloak-rooms, or the lobbies, or the Supreme Court Library, or the rotunda of the State House, to speak about it and to vote on it.

Jamie did not understand the bill, or know what it was for; he only knew that it was something about a franchise in Chicago, and that every week a party of rich-looking gentlemen would come down to Springfield and stand about in the House, or sit on the big red lounge behind the Speaker's chair, and whisper and try to get men to vote for it.

And Jamie knew, too, that it was called Senate Bill No. 578; he impressed that number firmly on his mind and could never forget it. He soon observed that on any day when he saw S. B. 578 on the calendar—which is a kind of program printed every morning to tell what bills are coming up—Mr. Meredith would be on his feet and make motions and speeches, and that the gentlemen on the Speaker's red lounge would scowl at him and the other city members try to answer him. And Jamie noticed that Mr. Meredith always succeeded in having the bill referred back to some committee, or did something to prevent it from becoming a law.

Jamie read the newspapers now and then. He always turned first to the base ball news—the season was just opening—and then to the legislative news, although he never read that as carefully as he did base ball news. Often he saw Mr. Meredith's name in types—the papers said he was making a gallant fight against the franchise grab. Jamie hoped with all his soul that Mr. Meredith would win in that fight; not, of course, that he cared about the franchise grab—he had, like many older persons, very hazy ideas about that—but he always wished to see Mr. Meredith win.

The spring had come, and as the Legislature usually ends early in June, and the work was piling up, the House was meeting at nine o'clock in the morning. The House adjourned every Friday at noon, in order that the members might go home over Sunday, and it didn't meet again until Monday afternoon at five o'clock, and then only for a few minutes. The members who had gone did not get back until Tuesday morning, and there were never many there Monday afternoon, not even a quorum, and it was always understood that nothing was to be done at that session. The chaplain prayed,

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the journal of Friday's session was read and approved, and the House adjourned until Tuesday morning.

But one Monday afternoon when Jamie reached the hall of the House he was surprised to find a big body of members there—almost all the Chicago members except Mr. Meredith. Those rich gentlemen were there, too, sitting on the Speaker's red lounge. Jamie looked for Mr. Meredith—he was not there. He thought instantly of Senate Bill 578—something was up! They were going to try to pass Senate Bill 578—that was why the gentlemen were there on the Speaker's red lounge; that was why the Chicago members had come down to Springfield on the Monday afternoon train instead of waiting for the Monday night train. Jamie was worried.

It was a balmy spring day with a sky blue and tender, and a soft wind that wafted strange sweet country smells about, smells that filled Jamie with dreamy longings and a kind of pleasant sadness. The Speaker gently tapped with his gavel; the good old chaplain arose and spread out his white hands.

"O Lord," he prayed, "we thank Thee that the winter is past, that the rain is over and gone, that the flowers appear upon the earth, that the time of the singing of the birds is come."

The words stole sweetly in upon Jamie's soul. He sat on the steps, looking out of the open windows at the tender young leaves of the maple trees—it was just the way he used to look out of the windows in school before vacation came, when he thought of the swimming-hole out at Sycamore and of going barefooted. It was all so calm and peaceful. But with the chaplain's "Amen!" the Speaker's gavel cracked and the buzzing noise peculiar to the House began again. And Jamie awoke from his reveries with a start. He had heavier things to think of now; he was almost a man; he was in the Legislature. Senate Bill 578 was on its third reading, the gang was present, and Mr. Meredith had not come. Jamie was troubled, and sighed. He must attend to his duties—he must do something.

Jamie looked over all the faces before him; nowhere could he find one man he could trust as a friend of Mr. Meredith.

He glanced at the door with a lingering hope that Mr. Meredith would appear, but of course he did not come. Then Jamie slowly hit-head down the Speaker's stairs, a step at a time, and, reaching the floor, slipped over by the reporters' boxes—empty that afternoon, for the correspondents, like the legislators, never returned until Tuesday morning—and thence into the side aisle, under the gallery, and to the cloakroom. There he got his cap, looked longingly at Mr. Meredith's hook, empty now, with no satin-lined overcoat for him to nestle lovingly against for a blissful second, and then he went on out into the hall under the huge dome.

No one, of course, observed a mere page boy, but Jamie felt, as he clicked his hurrying little heels across the marble floors, that something was about to poke him in his cold, unprotected back—the fear of a rear attack that boyhood inherits from its far-distant savage ancestry. Jamie didn't take the elevator, or the grand staircase, but reached the main floor by leaping two steps at a time down a narrow stairway, unused and dark.

Then he flew out of the east entrance, ran down the wide walk and on up Capitol Avenue for four long blocks—ran as fast as he could pump his little short legs to the hotel where he knew Mr. Meredith lived when he was at the capital. But Jamie had no hope of finding him there that afternoon. He went to the hotel simply because he did not know where else to go—that was all. Rushing into the hotel and up to the clerk's desk, he put his chin over its edge and, as the clerk leaned down with his face almost in Jamie's face, the boy panted:

"Is—now—Honorable Bronson Meredith in?"

The clerk smiled and Jamie blushed, fearing the clerk was making fun of him. And his heart sank—he might have known Mr. Meredith was not in. "Who did you say?" asked the clerk. "Honorable Bronson Meredith—the gentleman from Cook—"

The clerk was knitting his brows, though the wrinkles about his lips were twitching as if he found it hard to keep them from rippling out into smiles. Jamie thought the clerk was wonderfully stupid not to know such a great man as Mr. Meredith, and he added, in order to jog the man's memory a little:

"You know—the reformer."

The clerk straightened up, placed his hands on his hips, threw back his head and laughed. Jamie started at him with wide eyes—he saw nothing to laugh at, especially when Senate Bill 578 was coming up. Presently the clerk took one of his hands from his side and dropped it on the big bell beside the register, and as it clanged out in the empty lobby, he shouted in his laughing voice:

"Front!"

A bell boy in buttons slid to the desk just as a page boy does in the House when a member claps his hands. The bell boy and Jamie looked each other all over from head to toe in the instant they stood there facing each other, and the clerk began:

"Go see if Mr. Meredith—"

And just then a tall form appeared around the corner of a wall, and Jamie looked up.

It was Mr. Meredith himself, smiling as the spring, with a bunch of violets in the lapel of his new light coat. Jamie sprang at him.

"Oh, Mr. Meredith," he said, raising his clasped hands almost appealingly. "Come—quick!"

"Why, what's the matter?" said Mr. Meredith, halting in surprise. "They've got Senate Bill 578 up!"

Mr. Meredith's eyes opened; his face lost its mild expression. "What do you know about Senate Bill 578?"

Jamie took him by the coat—he dared at last to lay hands on his sacred person—and tugged as he said:

"Oh, honest—Mr. Meredith—honest—cross my heart they have—you'll be too late!"

Mr. Meredith looked at the pleading lad closely, and then suddenly exclaimed:

"Oh, yes! You're one of the page boys." And then he ran as fast as he could through the lobby, down the steps and across the sidewalk, Jamie after him.

"Come on!" cried Mr. Meredith as he stooped to plunge into a carriage at the curb, dragging Jamie in after him, and shouting to the driver:

"The State House—fast as you can drive!"

The driver whirled his carriage about in Sixth Street, and as Mr. Meredith drew in his head and slammed the heavy door he shouted:

"Faster there—I'll double your fare!"

The carriage lurched around the corner, the lash of the driver's whip whirled in the air, and the horses went galloping with the rattling old hack down Capitol Avenue. And as the carriage pitched and rocked Jamie was supremely happy—he had done what he could, and better than all, he was sitting beside Mr. Meredith and actually riding in the same hack with him!

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But suddenly a voice beside Jamie rang out like a bugle:

"Object!"

The Speaker looked up in amazement. The members of the gang turned about in their seats with startled, guilty faces; the rich gentlemen on the Speaker's red lounge leaned forward with pained expressions. Mr. Meredith was striving down the centre aisle, his hat in his hand, his face red, his eyes on fire.

Half way down the aisle he halted and once more shouted in that fearless note:

"I object! A million people in Chicago to-night are waiting to hear from this House on this franchise bill—I dare you to take it up in this chamber session!"

Mr. Meredith's hand swept a large area that included the whole House as he flung his defiance, and then he stood glaring at them all. The eyes that met Mr. Meredith's eyes quailed; the House was still. No one arose, no one replied to him.

Then after a long minute of this painful silence the Speaker, lowering his head until Jamie could not see his face, said in a low voice:

"Objections are heard."

And so the franchise grab bill was not taken up that day after all.

The session was very short after that, and when the House adjourned Mr. Meredith went down to the Speaker's side. The Speaker looked up as if he thought Mr. Meredith was coming to speak to him, but Mr. Meredith stopped at the steps, and taking Jamie's little hand he pressed it in his own big palm and said:

"Come with me."

It was the proudest moment of Jamie's life as he walked out of the noisy chamber, through the crowd of angry, balled members, past the staring pages, by the wondering doorkeepers, and so on out into the rotunda. They walked down the great white stairs, and as they passed around the polished brass railing of the balcony on the second floor Mr. Meredith said, as if suddenly reminded of something:

"Beg your pardon, but what's your name?"

"James Horn," replied Jamie. They kept on and Jamie wondered where they were going, until they turned into the Governor's office. Jamie's heart leaped suddenly. Surely this was a day of big surprises, thought he.

"Is the Governor in?" Mr. Meredith asked of the Governor's private secretary.

"Yes—just go right in, Mr. Meredith," and in another instant Jamie was standing beside Mr. Meredith in the presence of the Governor.

The Governor arose as they entered, and looked first at Mr. Meredith, then lowered his kind blue eyes and fixed them on Jamie.

"Governor," said Mr. Meredith, "I wish to present my little friend, Master James Horn."

The Governor bowed, took Jamie's hand in his own and said in his soft voice:

"I'm glad to meet you, Master Horn, I'm sure."

Jamie felt himself tingle all through at the Governor's words.

"Master Horn, Governor," continued Mr. Meredith, "is a page boy in the House, and to-day, when we were all caught napping, he saved the franchise bill from becoming a law."

The Governor, looking a question at Mr. Meredith, said:

"Ah?"

"Yes," answered Mr. Meredith; and then, when the Governor had motioned them take seats, and Jamie had worked and wiggled himself away back into a deep leather chair, with his legs and feet sticking straight out in front of him, Mr. Meredith told the Governor the whole story. When he had done, the Governor arose and went over to where Jamie sat in the big chair, his arms stretched along the chair's arms.

Jamie would have wriggled out of the chair, but he had not time to do so. And then, as he looked up into the grave, kind face, His Excellency, speaking very seriously, said:

"Mr. boy, you have done the people of Chicago and the people of Illinois a great service—a service you will understand some day—and now, on their behalf, I wish to thank you for it."

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