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## *The Need of Money*

BOOTH TARKINGTON

FAR BACK in his corner on the Democratic side of the House, Uncle Billy Rollinson sat through the dragging routine of the legislative session, wondering what most of it meant. When anybody spoke to him, in passing, he would answer, in his gentle, timid voice, "Howdy-do, sir." Then his cheeks would grow a little red and he would stroke his long, white beard elaborately, to cover his embarrassment. When a vote was taken, his name was called toward the last of the roll, so that he had ample time, after the leader of his side of the House, young Hurlbut, had voted, to clear his throat several times and say "Aye" or "No" in quite a firm voice. But the instant the word had left his lips he found himself terribly frightened, and stroked his beard a great many times, the while he stared seriously up at the ceiling, partly to avoid meeting anybody's eye, and partly in the belief that it concealed his agitation and gave him the air of knowing what he was about. Usually he did not know, any more than he knew how he had happened to be sent to the legislature by his county. But he liked it. He liked the feeling of being a person to be considered; he liked to think that he was making the laws of his State. He liked the handsome desk and the easy leather chair; he liked the row of fat, expensive volumes, the unlimited stationery, and the free penknives which were furnished him. He enjoyed the attentions of the coloured men in the cloak-room, who brushed him ostentatiously and always called him (and the other Representatives) "Senator," to make up to themselves for the airs which the janitors of the "Upper House" assumed. Most of these things surprised him; he had not expected to be treated with such liberality by the State and never realized that he and his colleagues were treating themselves to all these things at the expense of the people, and so, although he bore off as much note-paper as he could carry, now and then, to send to his son, Henry, he was horrified and dumbfounded when the bill was proposed appropriating \$135,000 for the expenses of the seventy days' session of the legislature.

He was surprised to find that among his "perquisites" were

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passes (good during the session) on all the railroads that entered the State, and others for use on many inter-urban trolley lines. These, he thought, might be gratifying to Henry, who was fond of travel, and had often been unhappy when his father failed to scrape up enough money to send him to a circus in the next county. It was "very accommodating of the railroads," Uncle Billy thought, to maintain this pleasant custom, because the members' travelling expenses were paid by the State just the same; hence the economical could "draw their mileage" at the Treasurer's office, and add it to their salaries. He heard—only vaguely understanding—many joking references to other ways of adding to salaries.

Most of the members of his party had taken rooms at one of the hotels, whither those who had sought cheaper apartments repaired in the evening, when the place became a noisy and crowded club, admission to which was not by card. Most of the rougher man-to-man lobbying was done here; and at times it was Babel.

Through the crowds Uncle Billy wandered shyly, stroking his beard and saying, "Howdy-do, sir," in his gentle voice, getting out of the way of people who hurried, and in great trouble of mind if any one asked him how he intended to vote upon a bill. When this happened he looked at the interrogator in the plaintive way which was his habit, and answered slowly: "I reckon I'll have to think it over." He was not in Hurlbut's councils.

There was much bustle all about him, but he was not part of it. The newspaper reporters remarked the quiet, inoffensive old figure pottering about aimlessly on the outskirts of the crowd, and thought Uncle Billy as lonely as a man might well be, for he seemed less a part of the political arrangement than any member they had ever seen. He would have looked less lonely and more in place trudging alone through the furrows of his home fields in a wintry twilight.

And yet, everybody liked the old man, Hurlbut in particular, if Uncle Billy had known it; for Hurlbut watched the votes very closely and was often struck by the soundness of Representative Rollinson's intelligence in voting.

In return, Uncle Billy liked Hurlbut better than any other man he had ever known—except Henry, of course. On the first

day of the session, when the young leader had been pointed out to him, Uncle Billy's humble soul was prostrate with admiration, and when Hurlbut led the first attack on the monopolistic tendencies of the Republican party, Representative Rollinson, chuckling in his beard at the handsome youth's audacity, himself dared so greatly as to clap his hands aloud. Hurlbut, on the floor, was always a storm centre: tall, dramatic, bold, the members put down their newspapers whenever his strong voice was heard demanding recognition, and his "Mr. Speaker!" was like the first rumble of thunder. The tempest nearly always followed, and there were times when it threatened to become more than vocal; when, all order lost, nine-tenths of the men on the other side of the House were on their feet shouting jeers and denunciations, and the orator faced them, out-thundering them all, with his own cohorts, flushed and cheering, gathered round him. Then, indeed, Uncle Billy would have thought him a god, if he had known what a god was.

Sometimes Uncle Billy saw him in the hotel lobby, but he seemed always to be making for the elevator in a hurry, with half-a-dozen people trying to detain him, or descending momentarily from the stairway for a quick, sharp talk with one or two members, their heads close together, after which Hurlbut would dart upward again.

Sometimes the old man sat down at one of the writing tables, in a corner of the lobby, and, annexing a sheet of the hotel note-paper, "wrote home" to Henry. He sat with his head bent far over, the broad brim of his felt hat now and then touching the hand with which he kept the paper from sliding; and he pressed diligently upon his pen, usually breaking it before the letter was finished. He looked so like a man bent upon concealment that the reporters were wont to say: "There's Uncle Billy humped up over his guilty secret again."

The secret usually took this form:

Dear Son Henry:

I would be glad if you was here. There is big doings. Hurlbut give it to them to-day. He don't give the Republicans no rest. he lights into them like sixty you would like to see him. They are plenty nice fellows in the Republicans too but they lay mighty low when Hurlbut gets after them. He was just in the office but went out. He always has a segar in his mouth but not lit. I expect hes quit. I send you enclosed last week's salary all but \$11.80 which I had to use as living is pretty

high in our capital city of the state. If you would like some of this hotel writing paper better than the kind I sent you of the General Assembly I can send you some the boys say it is free. I think it is all right you sold the calf but Wilkes didn't give you good price. Hurlbut come in while I was writing then. You bet he can always count on Wm. Rollinson's vote.

Well I must draw to a close, Yours truly

Your father.

"Wm. Rollinson" did not know that he was known to his colleagues and the lobby and the Press as "Uncle Billy" until informed thereof by a public print. He stood, one night, on the edge of a laughing group, when a reporter turned to him and said:

"The *Constellation* would like to know Representative Rollinson's opinion of the scandalous story that has just been told."

The old man, who had not in the least understood the story, summoned all his faculties, and, after long deliberation, bent his plaintive eyes upon the youth and replied:

"Well, sir, it's a-stonishing, a-stonishing!"

"Think it's pretty bad, do you?"

Some of the crowd turned to listen, and the old fellow, hopelessly puzzled, stroked his beard with a trembling hand, and then, muttering, "Well, young man, I expect you better excuse me," hurried away and left the place. The next morning he found the following item tacked to the tail of the "Legislative Gossip" column of the *Constellation*:

#### UNCLE BILLY ROLLINSON HORRIFIED

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Yesterday a curious and amusing story was current among the solons at the Nagmore Hotel. It seems that the wife of a country member of the last legislature had been spending the day at the hotel and the wife of a present member from the country complained to her of the greatly increased expenditure appertaining to the cost of living in the Capital City. "Indeed," replied the wife of the former member, "that is curious. But I suppose my husband is much more economical than yours, for he brought home \$1,500, that he'd saved out of his salary." As the salary is only \$456, and the gentleman in question did not play poker, much hilarity was indulged in, and there were conjectures that the economy referred to concerned his vote upon a certain bill before the last session, anent which the lobby pushing it

were far from economical. Uncle Billy Rollinson, the Gentleman from Wixinokee, heard the story, as it passed from mouth to mouth, but he had no laughter to greet it. Uncle Billy, as every one who comes in contact with him knows, is as honest as the day is long, and the story grieved and shocked him. He expressed the utmost horror and consternation, and requested to be excused from speaking further upon a subject so repugnant to his feelings. If there were more men of this stamp in politics, who find corruption revolting instead of amusing, our legislatures would enjoy a better fame.

Uncle Billy had always been agitated by the sight of his name in print. Even in the Wixinokee County *Clarion*, it dumbfounded him and gave him a strange feeling that it must mean somebody else, but this sudden blaze of metropolitan fame made him almost giddy. He folded the paper quickly and placed it under his coat, feeling vaguely that it would not do to be seen reading it. He murmured feeble answers during the day, when some of his colleagues referred to it; but when he reached his own little room that evening, he spread it out under his oil-smelling lamp and read it again. Perhaps he read it twenty times over before the supper bell rang. Perhaps the fact that he was still intent upon it accounted for his not hearing the bell, so that his landlady had to call him.

What he liked was the phrase: "Honest as the day is long." He did not go to the hotel that night. He went back to his room and read the *Constellation*. He liked the *Constellation*. Newspapers were very kind, he thought. Now and then, he would pick up his pile of legislative bills and try to spell through the ponderous sentences, but he always gave it up and went back to the *Constellation*. He wondered if Hurlbut had read it. Hurlbut had. The leader had even told the author of the item that he was glad somebody could appreciate the kind of a man Uncle Billy was, and his value to the body politic.

"Honest as the day is long," Uncle Billy repeated to himself, in the little room, nodding his head gravely. Then he thought for a long while about the member who had, according to the story, gone home with \$1,500. He sat up, that evening, until almost ten o'clock. Even after he had gone to bed, he lay awake with his eyes wide open in the darkness, thinking of the colossal sum. If anybody should come to *him* and offer him all that

money to vote a certain way upon a bill, he believed he would not take it, for that would be bribery; though Henry would be glad to have the money. Henry always needed money; sometimes the need was imperative—once, indeed, so imperative that the small, unfertile farm had been mortgaged beyond its value, otherwise very serious things must have happened to Henry. Uncle Billy wondered how offers of money to members were refused without hurting the intending donor's feelings. And what a great deal could be done with \$1,500, if a member could get it and still be as honest as the day is long!

About the second month of the session the floor of the House began steadily to grow more and more tumultuous. To an unpolitical onlooker, leaning over the gallery rail, it was often an incomprehensible Bedlam, or perhaps one might have been reminded of an ant-heap by the hurry and scurry and life and death haste in a hundred directions at once, quite without any distinguishable purpose. Twenty men might be rampaging up and down the aisles, all shouting, some of them furiously, others with a determination that was deadly, all with arms waving at the Speaker, some of the hands clenched, some of them fluttering documents, while pages ran everywhere in mad haste, stumbling and falling in the aisles. In the midst of this, other members, seated, wrote studiously; others mildly read newspapers; others lounged, half-standing against their desks, unlighted cigars in their mouths, laughing; all the while the patient Speaker tapped with his gavel on a small square of marble. Suddenly perfect calm would come and the voice of the reading clerk drone for half an hour or more, like a single bee in a country garden on Sunday morning.

Of all this Uncle Billy was as much a layman spectator as any tramp who crept into the gallery for a few hours out of the cold. The hurry and seethe of the racing sea touched him not at all, except to bewilderment, while he was carried with it, unknowing, toward the breakers. The shout of those breakers was already in the ears of many, for the crisis of the session was coming. This was the fight that was to be made on Hurlbut's "Railroad Bill," which was, indeed, but in another sense, known as the "Breaker."

Uncle Billy had heard of the "Breaker." He couldn't have helped that. He had heard a dozen say: "Then's when it's

going to be warm times, when that 'Breaker' comes up!" or, "Look out for that 'Breaker.' We're going to have big trouble." He knew, too, that Hurlbut was interested in the "Breaker," but upon which side he was for a long time ignorant.

Hurlbut always nodded to the old man, now, as he came down the aisle to his own desk. He had begun that, the day after the *Constellation* item. Uncle Billy never failed to be in his seat early in the morning, waiting for the nod. He answered it with his usual "Howdy-do, sir," then stroked his beard and gazed profoundly at the row of fat volumes in front of him, swallowing painfully once or twice.

This was all that really happened for Uncle Billy during the turmoil and scramble that went on about him all the day long. He had not been forced to discover a way to meet an offer of \$1,500, without hurting the putative donor's feelings. No lobbyist had the faintest idea of "approaching" the old man in that way. The members and the hordes of camp-followers and all the lobby had settled into a belief that Representative Rollinson was a sea-green Incorruptible, that of all honest members he was the most honest. He had become typical of honesty: sayings were current—"You might as well try to bribe Uncle Billy Rollinson!" "As honest as old Uncle Billy Rollinson." Hurlbut often used such phrases in private.

The "Breaker" was Hurlbut's own bill; he had planned it and written it, though it came over to the House from the Senate under a Senator's name. It was one of those "anti-monopolistic" measures which Democrats put their whole hearts into, sometimes, and believe in and fight for magnificently; an idea conceived in honesty and for a beneficent purpose, in the belief that a legislature by the wave of a hand can conjure the millennium to appear; and born out of an utter misconception of man and railroads. The bill needs no farther description than this: if it passed and became an enforced law, the dividends of every railroad entering the State would be reduced by two-fifths. There is one thing that will fight harder than a Democrat—that is a railroad.

The "Breaker" had been kept very dark until Hurlbut felt that he was ready; then it was swept through the Senate before the railroad lobby, previously lulled into unsuspection, could collect itself and block it. This was as Hurlbut had planned: that

the fight should be in his own House. It was the bill of his heart and he set his reputation upon it. He needed fifty-one votes to pass it, and he had them, and one to spare; for he took his followers, who formed the majority, into caucus upon it. It was in the caucus Uncle Billy learned that Hurlbut was "for" the bill. He watched the leader with humble, wavering eyes, thinking how strong and clear his voice was, and wondering if he never lit the cigar he always carried in his hand, or if he ever got into trouble, like Henry, being a young man. If he did, Uncle Billy would have liked the chance to help him out.

He had plenty of such chances with Henry; indeed, the opportunity may be said to have been unintermittent, and Uncle Billy was never free from a dim fear of the day when his son would get in so deeply that he could not get him out. Verily, the day seemed near at hand: Henry's letters were growing desperate and the old man walked the floor of his little room at night, more and more hopeless. Once or twice, even as he sat at his desk in the House, his eyes became so watery that he forced himself into long spells of coughing, to account for it, in case any one might be noticing him.

The caucus was uneventful and quiet, for it had all been talked over, and was no more than a matter of form.

The Republicans did not caucus upon the bill (they had reasons), but they were solidly against it. Naturally it follows that the assault of the railroad lobby had to be made upon the virtue of the Democrats *as* Democrats. That is, whether a member upon the majority side cared about the bill for its own sake or not, right or wrong, he felt it his duty as a Democrat to vote for it. If he had a conscience higher than a political conscience, and believed the bill was bad, his duty was to "bolt the caucus"; but all of the Democratic side believed in the righteousness of the bill, except two. One had already been bought and the other was Uncle Billy, who knew nothing about it, except that Hurlbut was "for" it and it seemed to be making a "big stir."

The man who had been bought sat not far from Uncle Billy. He was a furtive, untidy slouch of a man, formerly a Republican; he had a great capacity for "handling the coloured vote" and his name was Pixley. Hurlbut mistrusted him; the young man had that instinct, which good leaders need, for feeling the weak places in his following; and he had the leader's way, too,

of ever bracing up the weakness and fortifying it; so he stopped, four or five times a day, at Pixley's desk, urging the necessity of standing fast for the "Breaker," and expressing convictions as to the political future of a Democrat who should fail to vote for it; to which Pixley assented in his husky, tough-ward voice.

All day long now, Hurlbut and his lieutenants, disregarding the routine of bills, went up and down the lines, fending off the lobbyists and such Republicans as were working openly for the bill. They encouraged and threatened and never let themselves be too confident of their seeming strength. Some of those who were known, or guessed, to be of the "weaker brethren" were not left to themselves for half an hour at a time, from their breakfasts until they went to bed. There was always at elbow the "*Hold fast!*" whisper of Hurlbut and his lieutenants. None of them ever thought of speaking to Uncle Billy.

Hurlbut's "work was cut out for him," as they said. What work it is to keep every one of fifty men honest under great temptation for three weeks (which time it took for the hampered and filibustered bill to come up for its passage or defeat), is known to those who have tried to do it. The railroads were outraged and incensed by the measure; they sincerely believed it to be monstrous and thievish. "Let the legislature try to confiscate two-fifths of the lawyers', or the bakers', or the ironmoulders' just earnings," said they, "and see what will happen!"

When such a bill as this comes to the floor for the third time the fight is already over, oratory is futile; and Cicero could not budge a vote. The railroads were forced to fight as best they could; this was the old way that they have learned is most effective in such a case. Votes could not be had to "oblige a friend" on the "Breaker" bill; nor could they be procured by arguments to prove the bill unjust. In brief: the railroad lobby had no need to buy Republican votes (with the exception of the one or two who charged out of habit whenever legislation concerned corporations), for the Republicans were against the bill, but they did mortally need to buy two Democratic votes, and were willing to pay handsomely for them. Nevertheless, Mr. Pixley's price was not exorbitant, considering the situation; nor need he have congratulated himself so heartily as he did (in moments of retirement from public life) upon his prospective

\$2,000 (when the goods should be delivered) since his vote was assisting the railroads to save many million dollars a year.

Of course the lobby attacked the bill noisily; there were big guns going all day long; but those in charge knew perfectly well that the noise accomplished nothing in itself. It was used to cover the whispering. Still, Hurlbut held his line firm and the bill passed its second reading with fifty-two votes, Mr. Pixley being directed by his owners to vote for it on that occasion.

As time went on the lobby began to grow desperate; even Pixley had been consulted upon his opinion by Barrett, the young lawyer through whom negotiations in his case had been conducted. Pixley suggested the name of Rollinson and Barrett dismissed this counsel with as much disgust for Pixley's stupidity as he had for the man's person. (One likes a *dog* when he buys him.)

"But why not?" Pixley had whined as he reached the door. "Uncle Billy ain't so much! You listen to me. He wouldn't take it out-an'-out—I don't say as he would. But you needn't work that way. Everybody thinks it's no use to tackle him—but nobody never *tried*! What's he *done* to make you scared of him? *Nothing!* Jest set there and *looked!*"

After he had gone the fellow's words came back to Barrett: "Nobody never tried!" And then, to satisfy his conscience that he was leaving no stone unturned, yet laughing at the uselessness of it, he wrote a letter to a confidant of his, formerly a colleague in the lobby, who lived in the county-seat near which Uncle Billy's mortgaged acres lay. The answer came the night after the second vote on the "Breaker."

Dear Barrett:

I agree with your grafter. I don't believe Rollinson would be hard to approach if it were done with tact—of course you don't want to tackle him the way you would a swine like Pixley. A good many people around here always thought the old man simple-minded. He was given the nomination almost in joke—nobody else wanted it, because they all thought the Republicans had a sure thing of it; but Rollinson slid in on the general Democratic landslide in this district. He's got one son, a worthless pup, Henry, a sort of yokel Don Juan, always half drunk when his father has any money to give him, and just smart enough to keep the old man mesmerized. Lately Henry's been in a mighty serious peck of trouble. Last fall he got married to a girl here

in town. Three weeks ago a family named Johnson, the most shiftless in the county, the real low-down white trash sort, living on a truck patch out Rollinson's way, heard that Henry was on a toot in town, spending money freely, and they went after him. A client of mine rents their ground to them and told me all about it. It seems they claim that one of the daughters in the Johnson family was Henry's common-law wife before he married the other girl, and it's more than likely they can prove it. They are hollering for \$600, and if Henry doesn't raise it mighty quick they swear they'll get him sent over the road for bigamy. I think the old man would sell his soul to keep his boy out of the penitentiary and he's at his wits' ends; he hasn't anything to raise the money on and he's up against it. He'll do any thing on earth for Henry. Hope this'll be of some service to you, and if there's anything more I can do about it you better call me up on the long distance.

Yours faithfully,

J. P. WATSON.

P. S.—You might mention to our old boss that I don't want anything if services are needed; but a pass for self and family to New York and return would come in handy.

Barrett telegraphed an answer at once: "If it goes you can have annual for yourself and family. Will call you up at two sharp to-morrow."

It was late the following night when the lobbyist concluded his interview with Representative Rollinson, in the latter's little room, half lighted by the oil-smelling lamp.

"I knew you would understand, Mr. Rollinson," said Barrett as he rose to go. His eyes danced and his jaws set with the thought that had been jubilant within him for the last half-hour: "We've got 'em! We've got 'em! We've got 'em!" The railroads had defended their own again.

"Of course," he went on, "we wouldn't have dreamed of coming to you and asking you to vote against this outrageous bill if we thought for a minute that you had any real belief in it or considered it a good bill. But you say, yourself, your only feeling about it was to oblige Mr. Hurlbut, and you admit, too, that you've voted his way on every other bill of the session. Surely, as I've already said so many times, you don't think he'd be so unreasonable as to be angry with you for differing with him on the merits of only one! No, no, Hurlbut's a very

sensible fellow about such matters. You don't need to worry about *that!* After all I've said, surely you won't give it another thought, will you?"

Uncle Billy sat in the shadow, bent far over, slowly twisting his thin, corded hands, the fingers tightly interlocked. It was a long time before he spoke, and his interlocutor had to urge him again before he answered, in his gentle, quavering voice.

"No, I reckon not, if you say so."

"Certainly not," said Barrett briskly. "Why of course, we'd never have thought of making you a money offer to vote either for or against your principles. Not much! We don't do business that way! We simply want to do something for you. We've wanted to, all during the session, but the opportunity hadn't offered until I happened to hear your son was in trouble."

Out of the shadow came a long, tremulous sigh. There was a moment's pause; then Uncle Billy's head sank slowly lower and rested on his hands.

"You see," the other continued cheerfully, "we make no conditions, none in the world. We feel friendly to you and want to oblige you, but of course we do think you ought to show a little good-will towards *us*. I believe it's all understood: to-morrow night Mr. Watson will drive out in his buggy to this Johnson place, and he's empowered by us to settle the whole business and obtain a written statement from the family that they have no claim on your son. How he will settle it is neither your affair nor mine; nor whether it costs money or not. But he *will* settle it. We do that out of good-will to you, as long as we feel as friendly to you as we do now, and all we ask is that you show your good-will to us."

It was plain, even to Uncle Billy, that if he voted against Mr. Barrett's friends in the afternoon those friends might not feel so much good-will toward him in the evening as they did now; and Mr. Watson might not go to the trouble of hitching up his buggy to drive out to the Johnsons'.

"You see, it's all out of friendship," said Barrett, his hand on the door knob. "And we can count on yours to-morrow, can't we—absolutely?"

The grey head sank a little lower, and then after a moment the quavering voice answered:

"Yes, sir—I'll be friendly."

Before morning, Hurlbut lost another vote. One of his best men left on a night train for the bedside of his dying wife. This meant that the "Breaker" needed every one of the fifty-one remaining Democratic votes in order to pass. Hurlbut more than distrusted Pixley, yet he felt sure of the other fifty, and if, upon the reading of the bill, Pixley proved false, the bill would not be lost, since there would be a majority of votes in its favour, though not the constitutional majority of fifty-one required for its passage, and it could be brought up again and carried when the absent man returned. Thus, on the chance that Pixley had withstood tampering, Hurlbut made no effort to prevent the bill from coming to the floor in its regular order in the afternoon, feeling that it could not possibly be killed by a majority against it, for he trusted his fifty, now, as strongly as he distrusted Pixley.

And so the roll-call on the "Breaker" began, rather quietly, though there was no man's face in the hall that was not set to show the tenseness of high-strung nerves. The great crowd that had gathered and choked the galleries and the floor beyond the bar, and the Senators who had left their own chamber to watch the bill in the House, all began to feel disappointed; for nothing happened until Pixley's name was called.

Pixley voted "No!"

Uncle Billy, sitting far down in his leather chair on the small of his back, heard the outburst of shouting that followed; but he could not see Pixley, for the traitor was instantly surrounded by a ring of men, and all that was visible from where he sat was their backs and upraised, gesticulating hands. Uncle Billy began to tremble violently; he had not calculated on this; but surely such things would not happen to *him!*

The Speaker's gavel clicked through the uproar and the roll-call proceeded.

The clerk reached the name of Rollinson. Uncle Billy swallowed, threw a pale look about him and wrapped his damp hands in the skirts of his shiny old coat, as if to warm them. For a moment he could not answer. People turned to look at him.

"Rollinson!" shouted the clerk again.

"No," said Uncle Billy.

Immediately he saw above him and all about him a blur of men's faces and figures risen to their feet, he heard a hundred

voices say breathlessly: "*What!*" and one that said: "My God, that kills the bill!"

Then a horrible and incredible storm burst upon him, and he who had sat all the session shrinking unnoticed in his quiet, back seat, unnerved when a colleague asked the simplest question, found himself the centre and point of attack in the wildest mêlée that legislature ever saw. A dozen men, red, frantic, with upraised arms, came at him, Hurlbut the first of them. But the lobby was there, too; for it was not part of its calculations that the old man should be frightened into changing his vote.

There need have been no fear of that. Uncle Billy was beyond the power of speech. The lobby's agents swarmed on the floor, and, with half-a-dozen hysterically laughing Republicans, met the onset of Hurlbut and his men. It became a riot immediately. Sane men were swept up in it to be as mad as the rest, while the galleries screamed and shouted. All round the old man the fury was greatest; his head sank over his desk and rested on his hands as it had the night before; for he dared not lift it to see the avalanche he had loosed upon himself. He would have liked to stop his ears to shut out the egregious clamour of cursing and yelling that beset him, as his bent head kept the glazed eyes from seeing the impossible vision of the attack that strove to reach him. He remembered awful dreams that were like this; and now, as then, he shuddered in a cold sweat, being as one who would draw the covers over his head to shelter him from horrors in great darkness. As Uncle Billy felt, so might a naked soul feel at the judgment day, tossed alone into the pit with all the myriads of eyes in the universe fastened on its sins.

He was pressed and jostled by his defenders; once a man's shoulders were bent back down over his own and he was crushed against the desk until his ribs ached; voices thundered and wailed at him, threatening, imploring, cursing, cajoling, raving.

Smaller groups were struggling and shouting in every part of the room, the distracted sergeants-at-arms roaring and wrestling with the rest. On the high dais the Speaker, white but imperturbable, having broken his gavel, beat steadily with the handle of an umbrella upon the square of marble on his desk. Fifteen or twenty members, raging dementedly, were beneath

him, about the clerk's desk and on the steps leading up to his chair, each howling hoarsely:

"A point of *order!* A point of *or-der!*"

When the semblance of order came at last, the roll was finished, "reconsidered," the "Breaker" was beaten, 50 to 49, was dead; and Uncle Billy Rollinson was creeping down the outer steps of the State-house in the cold February slush and rain.

He was glad to be out of the nightmare, though it seemed still upon him, the horrible clamours, all gonging and blaring at *him*; the red, maddened faces, the clenched fists, the open mouths, all raging at *him*—all the ruck and uproar swam about the dazed old man as he made his slow, unseeing way through the wet streets.

He was too late for dinner at his dingy boarding house, having wandered far, and he found himself in his room without knowing very well how he had come there, indeed, scarcely more than half-conscious that he *was* there. He sat, for a long time, in the dark. After a while he mechanically lit the lamp, sat again to stare at it, then, finding his eyes watering, he turned from it with an incoherent whimper, as if it had been a person from whom he would conceal the fact that he was weeping. He leaned his arm against the window sill and dried his eyes on the shiny sleeve.

An hour later, there came a hard, imperative knock on the door. Uncle Billy raised his head and said gently:

"Come in."

He rose to his feet uncertain, aghast, when he saw who his visitor was. It was Hurlbut.

The young man confronted him darkly, for a moment, in silence. He was dripping with rain; his hat, unremoved, shaded lank black locks over a white face; his nostrils were wide with wrath; the "dry cigar" wagged between gritting teeth.

"Will ye take a chair?" faltered Uncle Billy.

The room rang to the loud answer of the other: "I'd see you in Hell before I'd sit in a chair of yours!"

He raised an arm, straight as a rod, to point at the old man. "Rollinson," he said, "I've come here to tell you what I think of you! I've never done that in my life before, because I never thought any man worth it. I do it because I need the luxury of it

—because I'm sick of myself not to have had gumption enough to see what you were all the time and have you watched!"

Uncle Billy was stung to a moment's life. "Look here," he quavered, "you hadn't ought to talk that way to me. There ain't a cent of money passed my fingers—"

Hurlbut's bitter laugh cut him short. "*No?* Don't you suppose *I know* how it was done? Do you suppose there's a man in the whole Assembly doesn't know how you were sold? I had it by the long distance an hour ago, from your own home. Do you suppose *we* have no friends there, or that it was hard to find out about the whole dirty business? Your son's not going to stand trial for bigamy; that was the price you charged for killing the bill. You and Pixley are the only men whom they could buy with all their millions! Oh, I know a dozen men who could be bought on other issues, but not on *this*! You and Pixley stand alone. Well, you've broken the caucus and you've betrayed the Democratic party. I've come to tell you that the party doesn't want you any more. You are out of it, do you hear? We don't want even to use you!"

The old man had sunk back into his chair, stricken white, his hands fluttering helplessly. "I didn't go to hurt your feelings, Mr. Hurlbut," he said. "I never knowed how it would be, but I don't think you ought to say I done anything dishonest. I just felt kind of friendly to the railroads—"

The leader's laugh cut him off again. "Friendly! Yes, that's what you were! Well, you can go back to your friends; you'll need them!—Mother in Heaven! How you fooled us! We thought you were the straightest man and the staunchest Democrat—"

"I b'en a Democrat all my life, Mr. Hurlbut. I voted fer—"

"Well, you're a Democrat no longer. You're done for, do you understand? And we're done with you!"

"You mean," the old man's voice shook almost beyond control; "you mean you're tryin' to read me out of the party?"

"Trying to!" Hurlbut turned to the door. "You're out! It's done. You can thank God that your 'friends' did their work so well that we can't prove what we know. On my soul, you dog, if we could I believe some of the boys would send you over the road."

An hour after he had gone, Uncle Billy roused himself from his stupor, and the astonished landlady heard his shuffling step on the stair. She followed him softly and curiously to the front door, and watched him. He was bare-headed but had not far to go. The night-flare of the cheap, all-night saloon across the sodden street silhouetted the stooping figure for a moment and then the swinging doors shut the old man from her view. She returned to her parlour and sat waiting for his return until she fell asleep in her chair. She awoke at two o'clock, went to his room, and was aghast to find it still vacant.

"The Lord have mercy on us all!" she cried aloud. "To think that old rascal'd go out on a spree! He'd better of stayed in the country where he belonged."

It was the next morning that the House received a shock which loosed another riot, but one of a kind different from that which greeted Representative Rollinson's vote on the "Breaker." The reading clerk had sung his way through an inconsequent bill; most of the members were buried in newspapers, gossiping, idling, or smoking in the lobbies, when a loud, cracked voice was heard shrilly demanding recognition.

"Mr. Speaker!" Every one turned with a start. There was Uncle Billy, on his feet, violently waving his hands at the Speaker. "Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker!" His dress was disordered and muddy; his eyes shone with a fierce, absurd, liquorish light; and with each syllable that he uttered his beard wagged to an unspeakable effect of comedy. He offered the most grotesque spectacle ever seen in that hall—a notable distinction.

For a moment the House sat in paralytic astonishment. Then came an awed whisper from a Republican: "Has the old fool really found his voice?"

"No, he's drunk," said a neighbour. "I guess he can afford it, after his vote yesterday!"

"Mister Speaker! *Mister Speaker!*"

The cracked voice startled the lobbies. The hangers-on, the typewriters, the janitors, the smoking members came pouring into the chamber and stood, transfixed and open-mouthed.

"*Mister Speaker!*"

Then the place rocked with the gust of laughter and ironical cheering that swept over the Assembly. Members climbed

upon their chairs and on desks, waving handkerchiefs, sheets of foolscap, and waste-baskets. "Hear 'im! *He-ear* 'im!" rang the derisive cry.

The Speaker yielded in the same spirit and said:

"The Gentleman from Wixinoctee."

A semi-quiet followed and the cracked voice rose defiantly:

"That's who I am! I'm the Gentleman from Wixinoctee an' I stan' here to defen' the principles of the Democratic party!"

The Democrats responded with violent hootings, supplemented by cheers of approval from the Republicans. The high voice out-shrieked them all: "Once a Democrat, always a Democrat! I voted Dem'cratic tick't forty year, born a Democrat an' die a Democrat. Fellow sizzens, I want to say to you right here an' now that principles of Dem'cratic party saved this country a hun'erd times from Republican mal-'diministration an' degradation! Lemme tell you this: you kin take my life away but you can't say I don' stan' by Dem'cratic party, mos' glorious party of Douglas an' Tilden, Hen'ricks, Henry Clay, an' George Washin'ton. I say to you they *hain't* no other party an' I'm member of it till death an' Hell an' f'rever after, so help me *God!*"

He smote the desk beside him with the back of his hand, using all his strength, skinning his knuckles so that the blood dripped from them, unnoticed. He waved both arms continually, bending his body almost double and straightening up again, in crucial efforts for emphasis. All the old jingo platitudes that he had learned from campaign speakers throughout his life, the nonsense and brag and blat, the cheap phrases, all the empty balderdash of the platform, rushed to his incoherent lips.

The lord of misrule reigned at the end of each sentence, as the members sprang again upon the chairs and desks, roaring, waving, purple with laughter. The Speaker leaned back exhausted in his chair and let the gavel rest. Spectators, pages, galleries whooped and howled with the members. Finally the climax came.

"I want to say to you just this *here*," shrilled the cracked voice, "an' you can tell the Republican party that I said so, tell 'em straight from *me*, an' I hain't goin' back on it; I reckon they know who I am, too; I'm a man that's honest—I'm as honest as the day is long, I am—as honest as the day is long—"

He was interrupted by a loud voice. "Yes," it cried, "*when that day is the twenty-first of December!*"

That let pandemonium loose again, wilder, madder than before. A member threw a pamphlet at Uncle Billy. In a moment the air was thick with a Brobdingnagian snow-storm: pamphlets, huge wads of foolscap, bills, books, newspapers, waste-baskets went flying at the grotesque target from every quarter of the room. Members "rushed" the old man, hooting, cheering; he was tossed about, half thrown down, bruised, but, clamorous over all other clamours, jumping up and down to shriek over the heads of those who hustled him, his hands waving frantically in the air, his long beard wagging absurdly, still desperately vociferating his Democracy and his honesty.

That was only the beginning. He had, indeed, "found his voice"; for he seldom went now to the boarding-house for his meals, but patronized the free-lunch counter and other allurements of the establishment across the way. Every day he rose in the House to speak, never failing to reach the assertion that he was "as honest as the day is long," which was always greeted in the same way.

For a time he was one of the jokes that lightened the tedious business of law-making, and the members looked forward to his "*Mis-ter Speaker*" as schoolboys look forward to recess. But, after a week, the novelty was gone.

The old man became a bore. The Speaker refused to recognize him, and grew weary of the persistent shrilling. The day came when Uncle Billy was forcibly put into his seat by a disgusted sergeant-at-arms. He was half drunk (as he had come to be most of the time), but this humiliation seemed to pierce the alcoholic vapours that surrounded his always feeble intelligence. He put his hands up to his face and cried like a whimpering child. Then he shuffled out and went back to the saloon. He soon acquired the habit of leaving his seat in the House vacant; he was no longer allowed to make speeches there; he made them in the saloon, to the amusement of the loafers and roughs who infested it. They badgered him, but they let him harangue them, and applauded his rhodomontades.

Hurlbut, passing the place one night at the end of the session, heard the quavering, drunken voice, and paused in the darkness to listen.

"I tell you, fellow-countrymen, I've voted Dem'cratic tick't forty year, live a Dem'crat, die a Dem'crat! An' I'm's honest as day is long!"

It was five years after that session, when Hurlbut, now in the national Congress, was called to the district in which Wix-inockee lies, to assist his hard-pressed brethren in a campaign. He was driving, one afternoon, to a political meeting in the country, when a recollection came to him and he turned to the committee chairman, who accompanied him, and said:

"Didn't Uncle Billy Rollinson live somewhere near here?"

"Why, yes. You knew him in the legislature, didn't you?"

"A little. Where is he now?"

"Just up ahead here. I'll show you."

They reached the gate of a small, unkempt, weedy graveyard and stopped.

"The inscription on the head-board is more or less amusing," said the chairman, as he got out of the buggy, "considering that he was thought to be pretty crooked, and I seem to remember that he was 'read out of the party,' too. But he wrote the inscription himself, on his death-bed, and his son put it there."

There was a sparse crop of brown grass growing on the grave to which he led his companion. A cracked wooden head-board, already tilting rakishly, marked Henry's devotion. It had been white-washed and the inscription done in black letters, now partly washed away by the rain, but still legible:

HERE LIES  
THE MORTAL REMAINS  
OF  
WILLIAM ROLLINSON  
A LIFE-LONG  
DEMOCRAT  
AND  
A  
MAN  
AS HONEST AS THE DAY IS LONG

The chairman laughed. "Don't that beat thunder? You knew his record in the legislature didn't you?"

“Yes.”

“He *was* as crooked as they say he was, wasn’t he?”

Hurlbut had grown much older in five years, and he was in Congress. He was climbing the ladder, and, to hold the position he had gained, and to insure his continued climbing, he had made some sacrifices within himself by obliging his friends—sacrifices which he did not name.

“I could hardly say,” he answered gently, his down-bent eyes fastened on the sparse, brown grass. “It’s not for us to judge too much. I believe, maybe, that if he could hear me now, I’d ask his pardon for some things I said to him once.”