

THE SENATOR'S SECRETARY



WASHINGTON is the City of the Lonesome Rich and the Hopeful Poor. It is filled with people who exude money at every pore and with people who have no visible means of support. You can go into the New Willard Hotel any night at six o'clock and step on the toes of forty soldiers of fortune who are soldiering there. If you happened to walk up Connecticut Avenue two hours earlier you saw a procession of the Lonesome Rich motoring up and down, and getting cross-eyed trying to look on both sides of the street at once, so no official or diplomatic dignitary should pass without a chance to nod affably at the lonesome ones.

The Lonesome Rich come here and build gilded palaces out Dupont Circle way, because it is easier to break into society here than it is in New York. The jimmy that forces its way into Washington society is made of dollars and dinners. New York is so jammed with millionaires that the really exclusive class is those who are broke. Washington is smaller and easier. The dollar-mark excites more attention. The society is more varied also, and more accommodating. In New York it is made up of the absurdly rich. In Washington it has other branches—the official side and the diplomatic side. So they come and build and break in, and then spend their time trying to get big names for their dinner-lists. When three or four social secretaries get to fighting over eligibles for dinners and receptions and the rest of the truck that passes for fun with these people with tired stomachs and puffs beneath their eyes, the carnage is something terrible.

Two kinds of rich people come to Washington: people who have struck it after long lives of endeavor, and people who have acquired riches through the simple expedient of marrying women who have wealth. Their tactics are always the same. They go out in the fashionable neighborhood and build marble palaces. They run largely to bathrooms, for in the old days bathrooms were novelties to them. Then they hunt every cover for social acquaintance that will put them on the plane their money demands. They get it, too. Your high official is willing to lend the lustre of his position to a function if the wine is good and the food right, and the diplomatists languidly accept, but inwardly give three cheers because it will not be necessary to light up the Embassy or Legation that night. They are thrifty folk, these diplomatists.

Nor are the Lonesome Rich so prone to profligacy as might be imagined. Their dinners are nicely graded to suit the company. The top-notchers get the vintage wines, the middle list the common or garden brands, and the fillers in, or those who are invited when the mighty ones are missing, it has been noted sometimes, get the domestic kind, with the bottles carefully wrapped in napkins, and discreet waiters holding them in place with perspiring paws.

The Hopeful Poor are more interesting—the soldiers of (their own) common good. I see them scooting through the Capitol, buttonholing a Senator here and a Representative there. I see them sidling into committee-rooms and waiting in hotel lobbies. Most of them represent. They have contingent outside connections. They do a little lobbying, do a little grafting, do a little borrowing and do everybody. The ordinary man who is shrewd and calculating and hard-headed becomes eligible for a bow-window room in an asylum for the feeble-minded as soon as he gets interested in anything before Congress. The great American public, I have learned, has a most hazy idea of Congress. It is the common thought that there must be "influence" to get anything through—and that is fairly right; but the average business man will always embrace the first proffer of influence that is held out to him after he strikes Pennsylvania Avenue, and that is what keeps the Hopeful Poor going.

I heard about a case the other day that was typical. A man who was perfectly legitimate bill that passed without any pushing, of time, thought he must get he got one—one of the best, The pusher made a report or two about the progress of the bill, and, of course, never said a word to anybody about it. He went to New York and stayed two weeks. The first day after he left the bill was reported and passed in the House, and a few days later passed the Senate and was made a law. When he got back a friend met him and said: "That bill you were interested in got through all right, I see."

"Got through?" gasped the pusher. "When? Where?" He looked into it and found the bill had been a law for several days. Then he telegraphed to his employer: "Pardon me for mentioning it, but I have received no fee for passing your bill, which has been a law for some time, having passed a week ago. I had thought you would attend to my fee without a reminder from me, but as the matter has, apparently, slipped your mind, I venture to ask you to remit." And the remittance came.

Now, how are you going to beat that, and who wants to beat it? It is the maxim of Washington that the outsider deserves to be trimmed, is waiting to be trimmed, and it is the boast of the Hopeful Poor that there are more expert trimmers here than anywhere else in the universe save, possibly, in the Chicago packing-houses.

"You see that pair," snorted a Senator the other day, as two dapper young men, silk-hatted and spatted—they wear spats in Washington—walked by. "I have positive knowledge that they are getting money by claiming to have influence with me and with a dozen other Senators, and I know that neither of them has even so much as spoken, in the course of his natural life, to any Senator on that list, save to say, 'Good-morning, Senator,' when they meet us in the corridor. If they should speak to any Senator they would be kicked out on the terrace."

That was an outburst of righteous indignation, but it didn't get very far, for any Senator could brand these slick young persons in a five-minute speech if he would; but nobody will. Congress takes this sort of thing as a matter of course, and the sharpers who live that way know they will not be disturbed. Even if they were, nothing could be done, for they have made no approaches, and, anyhow, the Washington view is that if a man who has legislation wants to be a sucker, that is his inalienable, God-given right, and nothing that might be said or done would stop him, anyway.

They were calling the Roll of the Dead Ones in our committee-room the other day. There are a lot of them: Alger, of Michigan; Allee, of Delaware; Benson, of Kansas; Millard, of Nebraska; Berry, of Arkansas; Blackburn and McCreary, of Kentucky; Carmack, of Tennessee; Clark, of Montana; Gearin, of Oregon; Dubois, of Idaho, and Patterson, of Colorado.

Blackburn is a silver-tongued orator who has fallen on days when gold, both for tongues and politics, is the standard. Time was when he could romp through Kentucky from the Pennyrite to the Forks of Elkhorn, and stir the populace to any action desirable, from chasing the negroes over to Indiana to voting as often as circumstances would permit for him. He tried it once too often. The populace would not stir. The younger element was in control and the old war-horse will be turned out to the blue grass. There was no answering tinkle when Joe made the welkin ring—not a tink. When he cried: "Rally, boys, rally!" the boys yawned and went off to the woods where the barbecue was going on.

There will be regret over the loss of Dubois, who is popular, although he is now serving as a Democrat, when

he came to the Senate originally as a Republican. Dubois followed the immortal ratio of sixteen to one out of the Republican party. He was much liked by his Republican colleagues, and would have been a prominent man on the majority side if he had not shifted, and could have remained in the Senate. He is next to the last of the silver men. Teller, of Colorado, is the last, and he will not come back, for he, too, is a Republican who got down on the wrong side of the fence and became a Democrat, and now contemplates a State that is solidly Republican.

Every time Teller gets up to make a Democratic speech he looks apprehensively at the glass ceiling of the Senate chamber, as if he expected a bolt to come through and slay him. He was a Republican so long that he cannot shake off the habit. Dubois is uneasy, too. They do not fit, and they know it, and the tragedy of it is that if they had stood by their party they would have been on top now, instead of on the verge of that oblivion that comes to the man who once held high place and then lost out.

I was present at the obsequies of simplified spelling in the Senate. Senator Lodge, the President's bosom friend, pronounced the funeral oration. Although the House had refused to spell in the new way and the President had revoked the order, the President, personally, reserved the right to shoot "tho" and "thru" and "prest" and "thoroly" at the Congress in his messages, and he shot messages at Congress so fast that Congress thought he had loaded a rapid-firing gun with his opinions on various subjects, and was turning the crank himself. Lodge said he thought it would be well to return to the "normal" method of spelling and translate the President's new-fashioned words into the old-fashioned style when they were incorporated into the records of Congress. Nobody objected, least of all the President.

They thought they were having fun with the President when they refused to adopt his three hundred simplified words, but the President didn't give a hoot. He advocated the reform as he advocates many others, with the idea that it might be a good thing. If it isn't a good thing the President doesn't worry about it.

The trouble with all this "rebuking" business is that the President is so much quicker-witted than Congress that he can discover fourteen ways out while they are trying to find the key to one door. Rebuking the President, as it is practiced in Congress, is about as profitable and conclusive as an insurgent movement which always starts with heavy cannonading and always ends with a futile pop!

I was over in the House the other day and heard that Fred Landis, of Indiana, whose one term in the House did not meet with that spontaneous demand for a second one that the Landis family imagined would come, is a candidate for head doorkeeper of the House. This is a fat and comfortable job, with a good deal of patronage and nothing to do but shake hands with the members. Landis views his approaching separation from the pay-roll with that innate dread that is bred in the Landis bone.

Two of the Landises are now in the House as Representatives, one is a Federal Judge in Chicago, one is postmaster at San Juan, Porto Rico, and one is a physician in Cincinnati, with a few side-lines that get Government money in the way of pension examinerships and things like that. There are no other Landises. In order that the calamity of one of them being out in the cold shall not appear, the Landises are all out for Fred.

It seems impossible that the Republic should be so ungrateful as that to any Landis. "No man," said my Senator, "who has not held a Government job can imagine how it tears the heart-strings to be separated from one. Once a man gets on the pay-roll he imagines he is there by divine right, and, as I have observed them, imagination is a strong trait in the Landis family."