

A Man With Ambitions

By M. QUAD

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It was a hot day, and Abe Harper sat on a chair under the awning of the grocery with his feet on the side of a barrel and his head propped on his hand. Colonel Harper, who had come into town and left his wife hitched in front of the postoffice, came along on his way to the drug store and halted to say:

"That you, Abe? I declare to goodness, but I didn't know you'd be so powerful in town."

"How my kumel, bless me!" exclaimed Abe in reply as he slowly lowered his legs to give the colonel the benefit of the barrel. "I was just a-thinking about you, kumel—just a-thinking and a-pondering. How's the a-getting on this weather?"

"Ought to be a little bit rain, meb-be, but co'n't lookin' tall bad."

"And mebbe hold their own, I reckon to consider?"

"Just about hold their own, Abe?"

"That's good, kumel. If I can't hold my own I'm still glad to see other folks do it. Things are looking up a bit for me, however. These yere Pike county scandals seem to have got tired of throwing me down and jumping on my back, and mebbe I'll get a chance to draw a long breath. Dawg-dog folks who ain't willing for other folks to get along! Has Pike county ever attended for head to help me 'rumb up?"

"Reckon not, Abe?"

"No, suh; no, suh, 'cept by one solitary human being, whose name is Kurnel Harper."

"When the wah ended I run for office same as all the rest. They owed me an office for having laid down my life for my country, but what was my reward? Kurnel Harper, I reckon you can remember that I was knocked out—killed twenty feet high—approved under 'em you couldn't see the top of my leg. That's the way Pike county encouraged me to grab hold with both hands and climb to the top."

"Yes, I remember about that," mused the colonel as he watched a dog rolling over and over in the dusty street.

"Then I turned to law," continued Abe as he hitched the chair over to get a brace for his feet on a post of the veranda. "Kurnel Harper, nobody on the face of this big earth will ever know how I pinched and saved and starved and worked to get that law business down to a fine point."

"Want, I got to be a lawyer, then what? I wanted practice. I finally got a case and went into court with it, but the posky jury was lying in ambush to throw me down. Yes, suh, 'em the publicest, nicest, cleanest case you ever heard tell of, and that jury was bound by law and evidence to bring in a verdict for me, but I got the cold sup, instead. They brought my client in guilty of stealing a hawk when he was thirty miles away at the time at the bedside of his dying mother. Do you call that encouraging a young man, kumel? Was that giving me a show to climb up?"

"Can't hardly call it that, Abe, but if I remember right they found fresh pork in your client's house."

"They found meat there, of co'se, but was it the meat of that never change or some other? They never stopped to consider, kumel—jest throwin' the verdict agin me in order to crush me out. Same way in the second case and the third and fourth. No matter how many witnesses I had or how plain I made my case, no Pike county jury would find for me. Now many times have you to stop a young man, Kurnel Harper, to 'kill on' his ambition and take the fight out of him?"

"Bont fo' times, I reckon."

"Jest about fo' times, kumel. After that fourth you realized that Pike county was agin me as a lawyer, and I went into politics. There I was fopped agin I took to the lecture platform, and how many times did I lecture? Jest once, kumel. Then came the flop."

"But you won't have to go to work, will you, Abe?" queried the colonel, with a tinge of sarcasm in his voice.

"Never in this world, kumel; never in this world. That's what Pike county wants to drive me into, but she shall never succeed. I've got ideas, sub-ideas. I've got a scheme for putting me water in whisky and thus doubling production. I've invented a bar with fo' bungs holes instead of two. I've got a borseholes with a spring to it to help start the horse off. I've got a scheme to do away with all doorsteps and save 500,000,000 a year. I've got a scheme to make all folks with two arms only and thus save every household \$10 a year. I've got fo'ly different good things to work on, Kurnel Harper, and I'm telling you I'll yet see the day I can buy and sell this crowd that's trying to keep me down. I'll do it for shore, kumel—do it for shore."

"I reckon you will, Abe. Leastwise, I never saw you so stirred up before. What you got in you'r throat to make you gasp and gurgle that way?"

"Can't you understand, kumel?"

"Not skandy. Haven't swallowed one of these posky bungs, have you?"

"No, it's not bungs. It's a half an hour over my regular time, kumel, and I've got a thing to me. No, I don't mind stepping around with you for a nip, being you are a man who don't like to sit alone and have had the program to sell me. Jest left the way, kumel, and I'll be doing a business date—same as if I had a contract for an accident, you know?"

STATE OF NEW YORK, Office of the Secretary of State, Albany, July 21, 1931.

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