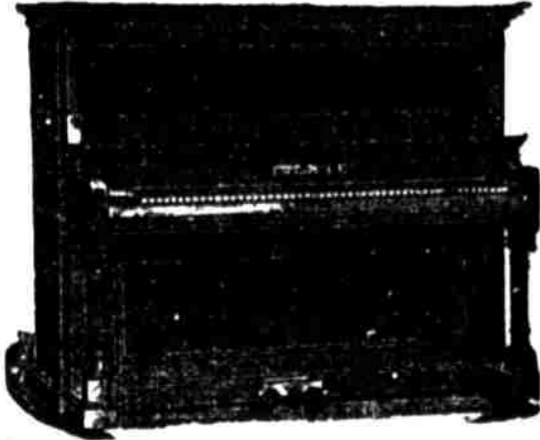


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Among the Alumni

George W. Cline, an alumnus of the University, and now city editor of the Daily Star, of this city, has a story in the issue of the Minneapolis Times for April 3, which is entitled: "The Defeat of the White Star Oil." The story deals with the attempts of a lobbyist to influence the legislature in favor of the oil trust against the interests of the commonwealth, and his failure, and with other consequent events. There is a woman in the case, who devises a brilliant scheme for recuperating the interests of the Oil Trust, after the blow suffered through the failure of the lobbyist to gain the good side of the legislature.

Following the plot through it is evident that all of the leading situations are analogous to events and conditions in politics in this state, and in fact the whole story seems allegorical in this respect. At the beginning of the story, the legislature in session is presented as the scene of action. House roll 170, a bill to raise the standard of all illuminating oils to 112 degree flash test, had been passed in the house by a narrow margin, to the great discomfiture of Mr. Robert Harlan, more commonly known as "King" Harlan, the prince of lobbyists, who represented the interests of the White Star Oil company. Treasure had been used by him to no effect, as two of the representatives of the western part of the state stood solidly against him. These were Mason and Burwell. The White Star Oil Co. had for years been dumping carload after carload of adulterated oil into the state, because of a loose, amending law passed years before. An issue growing out of this had been twice joined before, and "King" Harlan had won out both times. But now he had met defeat at last.

His allies had followed Mason and Burwell around and had found out all views, but he had failed probably because he had failed to offer these two senators a cash consideration. The only resource he had was the governor. The governor, merely a down-country banker, met Harlan in his private office, with outstretched hand and a look of vague unrest in his eyes. But he obtained little satisfaction from him and resigned himself to defeat.

Here Miss Emily Vance, a lieutenant of Harlan, enters upon the scene. She is acquainted with the news of Harlan's defeat from his own lips. Her chief characteristics were that she was a student of men, well educated and professionally ambitious, all of which made her a successful lobbyist.

That evening she went to the theatre with a young legislator, while there she overheard the conversation of President Wyeth of the state university. In the box adjacent to hers. He was discussing with a friend the situation; how the University had been pinched each year and how for years it had needed a building on the University campus for debating societies, and literary clubs, but that he had not dared to suggest it. One of the party with him brutally interjected: "Perhaps you forgot to call Carnegie's or Schwab's attention to it."

Emily Vance heard the rejoinder, and with the remark came a plan startling and audacious. She would win the battle for the White Star Oil Co. alone, unaided. She acted at once and before midnight a fast train was bearing her to the millionaire, Mr. Conway, who controlled the destinies of the White Star Oil.

Arrived, she acquainted the great man with the news of the defeat of King Harlan, and then revealed her plan in response to his interrogation as follows:

"But your plan?" he queried impatiently.

"Erect a building on the campus of their state university," replied Miss Vance.

Mr. Conway was not all enthusiastic at first over the scheme. Then Emily explains that it would defeat the bill, as it was the oil inspector's duty to enforce the law. The inspector was appointed by the governor and both were amendable to public sentiment. The state university was at the head of the public school system of the state and was committed against capital. Six of its graduates had made fiery speeches against corporations in the legislature. But give the university a \$100,000 building and the deans and professors would look to millionaires.

This building should be a temple for debating, discussion and forensics, a place where the societies of the institution might meet. Then, when alumni of the university rose in the legislature and opposed capital too strongly, they will be confronted with this argument: "You got your education in an institution fostered by capital." That would be an unanswerable argument and eternal.

If Mr. Conway would give \$2 for every \$1 raised by the people the plan would work better, and it would require a tremendous amount of effort for them to raise \$40,000. He would not need to promise anything, but imply if the other institutions showed unrest.

This was a good piece of advice and Miss Vance received a check for \$2,000 for her happy suggestion. In the last situation after a year had elapsed, Miss Vance, chief diplomatic agent for the White Star Oil Co., discusses the situation with Harlan, now the representative of a fourth class corporation, as follows:

"Take the oil sold this year, and the difference in value between 112-degree oil and the 75-degree-grade amounts to \$412,000," she explained. "Take out the price of the building, which, by the way, isn't due yet, and we are ahead more than \$300,000."

"There may be better buildings on the campus," said Harlan, "but mighty few have cost the people more."

"Yes," assented Miss Vance, with a reminiscent chuckle, "and Mason didn't win."

Mr. Cline's theory is very ingenious, and he has a good and original idea for a story. Miss Vance certainly floored them all and we are quite lost in admiration of her tact. The plot is well connected, and the story seems true to life as far as our own experience goes.

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