

## CHAPTER XII

### THE SERVITUDE OF THE MIGHTY

As the situation became more complicated and the urgent dangers crowded closer and closer upon the Lord Paramount, this realization of the atmosphere of haste in which the great decisions of our modern world are made grew more and more vivid and dominant in his vision of the rôle he had to play.

“I found my task too easy at the beginning,” he said to Mrs. Pinchot. “Plainly there has to be a struggle, an intricate struggle. I had counted on national and imperial solidarity. I find I have to create it. I had counted on trusty allies, and I find I must take precautions against them. I thought I should be sustained by patriotic science and patriotic finance and patriotic business enterprise, and I find men without souls that evade my inspiration. I fight against forces of dissolution more powerful than I ever dreamt could be launched against the established order of human life. Only our army, our navy, the church, and the old conservative classes stand out amidst this universal decay. They keep their form; they still embody imperial purpose. On these at least I can rely. But see what falls upon me.”

“My demi-God!” breathed Mrs. Pinchot, but

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lest it should be a source of embarrassment to both of them he affected not to hear. He became magnificently practical.

"I must organize my life so that not a moment of time nor an ounce of energy goes to waste. Here I shall install myself for good. Here I must trust you to control my staff and arrange my hours. Here you must make me as much of a home as I can have, as well as an office. Your intelligence I know I can count upon, as I count upon your loyalty. Gradually we will select a staff from the civil service to act as a filter for news and for responsibility. We will apportion each man his task. At present we have still to assemble that machine. Economy of force, efficiency of action. . . ."

Very rapidly these ideas bore fruit, and the Lord Paramount's life began to be ordered so as to squeeze the utmost work out of his marvellous brain in his gigantic struggle to keep the Empire and the world upon the rails of established tradition.

Sir Titus Knowles, formerly so antagonistic, had now become the rude but subjugated servant of the Master's revealed greatness. To him was entrusted the task of keeping the Lord Paramount fit. He dieted and when necessary he drugged this precious body. He pursued its chemical variations in all their manifestations with sedulous watchfulness. He prescribed its phases of rest and its intervals of sleep.

Sir Titus had found his place in life.

All day and all night, at every half hour, a

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simple meal, a cutlet, or a roast fowl would be prepared. Had the moment come to eat? If not, the meal was dismissed and the next in succession was brought into readiness for service. So too the Lord Paramount's couch or his bed was always there for repose or slumber.

War and diplomacy have been compared to the game of chess, but it is chess with a board of uncertain shape and extent and with pieces with unlimited powers of spontaneous movement. At any moment astounding adjustments of view must be possible, if this game is to be carried to a triumphant conclusion. In his own room he had a comparatively clear table, from which all papers not immediately under consideration were banished. Usually it bore only a water bottle and glass and a silver bowl in which every day Mrs. Pinchot arranged a fresh mass of simple but beautiful flowers. She and she alone shared this workroom with him, silent and watchful, the only being whose continual close proximity did not interfere with the mighty workings of his mind. Thence he moved to and fro between the large apartment in which General Gerson and Field-Marshal Capper had tables covered with maps, and a series of other apartments containing books and files for reference, in which expert secretaries waited, ready to leap to their feet and answer the slightest inquiry. Beyond and out of hearing were typists and other copyists. Further were an outer circle of messengers, waiting-rooms for visitors, and the like.

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Sir Titus arranged that the Lord Paramount should take exercise in artificially oxygenated chambers, clad in a restricted but becoming costume reminiscent of a Spartan athlete. There also he rode horseless saddles that bucked and reared in the most hygienic fashion, or he rowed in imaginary boat races with dials recording his speed, or he punched leather balls, or cycled on stationary bicycles, or smacked golf balls at targets that registered the force and distance of his drive—always in a manner, Sir Titus arranged, to exhilarate him and sustain his self-confidence. And once a day he would drive out with Mrs. Pinchot through the sullen and yet stimulating atmosphere of the capital.

A simple life it was in essence that the Lord Paramount led during this phase, a life of industrious servitude for the sake of all the noblest traditions of mankind.