Scott Leroy

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Содержание

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Chapter I
ON THE ST. ETIENNE HOTEL

The St. Etienne Hotel would some day be as bulky and as garishly magnificent as four million dollars could make it. Now it was only a steel framework rearing itself into the center of the overhead grayness – a black pier supporting the grimy arch of heaven.

Up on its loosely-planked twenty-first story stood Mr. Driscoll, watching his men at work. A raw February wind scraped slowly under the dirty clouds, which soiled the whole sky, and with a leisurely content thrust itself into his office-tendered flesh. He shivered, and at times, to throw off the chill, he paced across the pine boards, carefully going around the gaps his men were wont to leap. And now and then his eyes wandered from his lofty platform. On his right, below, there were roofs; beyond, a dull bar of water; beyond, more roofs: on his left there were roofs; a dull bar of water; more roofs: and all around the jagged wilderness of house-tops reached away and away till it faded into the complete envelopment of a smudgy haze. Once

Mr. Driscoll caught hold of the head of a column and leaned out above the street; over its dizzy bottom erratically shifted dark specks – hats. He drew back with a shiver with which the February wind had nothing to do.

It was a principle with Mr. Driscoll, of Driscoll & Co., contractors for steel bridges and steel frames of buildings, that you should not show approval of your workmen's work. "Give 'em a smile and they'll do ten per cent. less and ask ten per cent. more." So as he now watched his men, one hand in his overcoat pocket, one on his soft felt hat, he did not smile. It was singularly easy for him not to smile. Balanced on his short, round body he had a round head with a rim of reddish-gray hair, and with a purplish face that had protruding lips which sagged at each corner, and protruding eyes whose lids blinked so sharply you seemed to hear their click. So much nature had done to help him adhere to his principle. And he, in turn, had added to his natural endowment by growing mutton-chops. Long ago someone had probably expressed to him a detestation of side-whiskers, and he of course had begun forthwith to shave only his chin.

His men were setting twenty-five foot steel columns into place, – the gang his eyes were now on, moving actively about a great crane, and the gang about the great crane at the building's other end. Their coats were buttoned to their chins to keep out the February wind; their hands were in big, shiny gloves; their blue and brown overalls, from the handling of painted iron, had the surface and polish of leather. They were all in the freshness

of their manhood – lean, and keen, and full of spirit – vividly fit. Their work explained their fitness; it was a natural civil service examination that barred all but the active and the daring.

And yet, though he did not smile, Mr. Driscoll was cuddled by satisfaction as he stood on the great platform just under the sky and watched the brown men at work. He had had a deal of trouble during the past three years – accidents, poor workmen, delays due to strikes over inconsequential matters – all of which had severely taxed his profits and his profanity. So the smoothness with which this, his greatest job, progressed was his especial joy. In his heart he credited this smoothness to the brown young foreman who had just come back to his side – but he didn't tell Keating so.

"The riveters are keeping right on our heels," said Tom. "Would you like to go down and have a look at 'em?"

"No," said Mr. Driscoll shortly.

The foreman shrugged his shoulders slightly, and joined the gang Mr. Driscoll was watching. In the year he had worked for Mr. Driscoll he had learned to be philosophic over that gentleman's gruffness: he didn't like the man, so why should he mind his words?

The men had fastened a sling about a twenty-five foot column and to this had attached the hook of the pulley. The seventy-foot arm of the crane now slowly rose and drew after it the column, dangling vertically. Directed by the signals of Tom's right hand the column sank with precision to its appointed place at one

corner of the building. It was quickly fastened to the head of the column beneath it with four bolts. Later the riveters, whose hammers were now maintaining a terrific rattle two floors below, would replace the four bolts by four rows of rivets.

"Get the sling, Pete," ordered Tom.

At this a loosely-jointed man threw off his slouch hat, encircled the column with his arms, and mounted with little springs. Near its top he locked his legs around the column, and, thus supported and working with both hands, he unfastened the rope from the pulley hook and the column, and threw it below. He then stepped into the hook of the pulley, swung through the air to the flooring, picked up his hat and slapped it against his leg.

Sometimes Mr. Driscoll forgot his principle. While Pete was nonchalantly loosening the sling, leaning out over the street, nothing between him and the pavement but the grip of his legs, there was something very like a look of admiration in Mr. Driscoll's aggravating eyes. He moved over to Pete just as the latter was pulling on his slouch hat.

"I get a shiver every time I see a man do that," he said.

"That? That's nothin'," said Pete. "I'd a heap ruther do that than work down in the street. Down in the street, why, who knows when a brick's agoin' to fall on your head!"

"Um!" Mr. Driscoll remembered himself and his eyes clicked. He turned from Pete, and called to the young foreman: "I'll look at the riveters now."

"All right. Oh, Barry!"

There came toward Tom a little, stocky man, commonly known as "Rivet Head." Someone had noted the likeness of his cranium to a newly-hammered rivet, and the nickname had stuck.

"Get the other four columns up out of the street before setting any more," Tom ordered, and then walked with Mr. Driscoll to where the head of a ladder stuck up through the flooring.

Pete, with a sour look, watched Mr. Driscoll's round body awkwardly disappear down the ladder.

"Boys, if I was a preacher, I know how I'd run my business," he remarked.

"How, Pete?" queried one of the gang.

"I'd stand up Driscoll in the middle o' the road to hell, then knock off workin' forever. When they seen him standin' there every blamed sinner'd turn back with a yell an' stretch their legs for the other road."

"I wonder if Tom'll speak to him about them scabs," said another man, with a scowl at a couple of men working along the building's edge.

"That ain't Tom's business, Bill," answered Pete. "It's Rivet Head's. Tom don't like Driscoll any more'n the rest of us do, an' he ain't goin' to say any more to him'n he has to."

"Tom ought to call him down, anyhow," Bill declared.

"You let Foley do that," put in Jake Henderson, a big fellow with a stubbly face and a scar across his nose.

"An' let him peel off a little graft!" sneered Bill.

"Close yer face!" growled Jake.

"Come on there, boys, an' get that crane around!" shouted Barry.

Pete, Bill, and Jake sprang to the wooden lever that extended from the base of the ninety-foot mast; and they threw their weight against the bar, bending it as a bow. The crane slowly turned on its bearings to the desired position. Barry, the "pusher" (under foreman), waved his outstretched hand. The signalman, whose eyes had been alert for this movement, pulled a rope; a bell rang in the ears of an engineer, twenty-one floors below. The big boom slowly came down to a horizontal position, its outer end twenty feet clear of the building's edge. Another signal, and the heavy iron pulley began to descend to the street.

After the pulley had started to slide down its rope there was little for the men to do till it had climbed back up the rope with its burden of steel. Pete – who was usually addressed as "Pig Iron," perhaps for the reason that he claimed to be from Pittsburg – settled back at his ease among the gang, his back against a pile of columns, his legs stretched out.

"I've just picked out the apartment where I'm goin' to keep my celluloid collar when this here shanty's finished," he remarked. "Over in the corner there, lookin' down in both streets. I ain't goin' to do nothin' but wear kid gloves, an' lean out the windows an' spit on you roughnecks as you go by. An' my boodwar is goin' to have about seventeen push-buttons in it. Whenever I want anything I'll just push a button, an' up'll hot-foot a nigger with it in a suit o' clothes that's nothin' but shirt front. Then I'll kick

the nigger, an' push another button. That's life, boys. An' I'll have plush chairs, carpets a foot thick, an iv'ry bath-tub – "

Pete's wandering gaze caught one man watching him with serious eyes, and he broke off. "Say, Johnson, wha' d'you suppose I want a bath-tub for?"

Johnson was an anomaly among the iron-workers – a man without a sense of humor. He never knew when his fellows were joking and when serious; he usually took them literally.

"To wash in," he answered.

Pete whistled. "Wash in it! Ain't you got no respect for the traditions o' the workin' class?"

"Hey, Pig Iron; talk English!" Bill demanded. "What's traditions?"

Pete looked puzzled, and a laugh passed about the men. Then his sang-froid returned. "Your traditions, Bill, is the things you'd try to forget about yourself if you had enough coin to move into a place like this."

He turned his lean face back on Johnson. "Don't you know what a bath-tub's for, Johnson? Don't you never read the papers? Well, here's how it is: The landlords come around wearin' about a sixteen-candle-power incandescent smile. They puts in marble bath-tubs all through all the houses. They're goin' to elevate us. The next day they come around again to see how we've improved. They throw up their hands, an' let out a few yells. There's them bath-tubs chuck full o' coal. We didn't know what they was for, – an' they was very handy for coal. That's us. It's down in the

papers. An' here you, Johnson, you'd ruin our repitations by usin' the bath-tubs to bathe in."

The pulley toiled into view, dragging after it two columns. Johnson was saved the necessity of response. The men hurried to their places.

"O' course, Pig Iron, you'll be fixed all right when you've moved in here," began Bill, after the boom had reached out and the pulley had started spinning down for the other two columns. "But how about the rest of us fixers? Three seventy-five a day, when we get in only six or seven months a year, ain't makin' bankers out o' many of us."

"Only a few," admitted Pete; "an' them few ain't the whole cheese yet. Me, I can live on three seventy-five, but I don't see how you married men do."

"Especially with scabs stealin' your jobs," growled Bill, glancing again at the two men working along the building's edge.

"I told you Foley'd look after them," said Barry, who had joined the group for a moment. "It hustles most of us to keep up with the game," he went on, in answer to Pete's last remark. "Some of us don't. An' rents an' everything else goin' up. I don't know what we're goin' to do."

"That's easy," said Pete. "Get more money or live cheaper."

"How're we goin' to live cheaper?" demanded Bill.

"Yes, how?" seconded Barry.

"I'm for more money," declared Bill.

"Well, I reckon I wear the same size shoe," said Pete. "More

money – that's me."

"And me," "and me," joined in the other men, except Johnson.

"It's about time we were gettin' more," Pete advanced. "The last two years the bosses have been doin' the genteel thing by their own pockets, all right."

"We've got to have more if our kids are goin' to know a couple o' facts more'n we do." Barry went over to the edge of the building and watched the tiny figures attaching the columns to the pulley hook.

"That's right," said Pete. "You don't stand no chance these days to climb up on top of a good job unless you ripped off a lot o' education when you was young an' riveted it on to your mem'ry. I heard a preacher once. He preached about education. He said if you wanted to get up anywhere you had to be educated like hell. He was right, too. If you left school when you was thirteen, why, by the time you're twenty-seven an' had a few drinks you ain't very likely to be just what I'd call a college on legs."

"Keating, he thinks we ought to go after more this spring," said Bill.

"I wonder what Foley thinks?" queried another of the men.

"If Tom's for a strike, why, Foley'll be again' it," one of the gang answered. "You can place your money on that color."

"Tom certainly did pour the hot shot into Foley at the meetin' last night," said Bill, grinning. "Grafter! He called Buck about thirteen diff'rent kind."

"If Keating's all right in his nut he'll not go round lookin' for

a head-on collision with Buck Foley," asserted Jake, with a wise leer at Bill.

Bill answered by giving Jake his back. "Foley don't want no strike," he declared. "What's he want to strike for? He's gettin' his hand in the dough bag enough the way things is now."

"See here, the whole bunch o' you roughnecks give me a pain!" broke out Pete. "You shoot off your faces a lot when Buck's not around, but the imitation you give on meetin' nights of a collection o' mummies can't be beat. I ain't in love with Buck – not on your life! You can tell him so, Jake. But he certainly has done the union a lot o' good. Tom'd say that, too. An' you know how much Tom likes Foley. You fixers forget when you was workin' ten hours for two dollars, an' lickin' the boots o' the bosses to hold your jobs."

There was a short silence, then Johnson put forward cautiously: "I don't see the good o' strikin'."

Pete stared at him. "Why?" he demanded.

"Well, I've been in the business longer'n most o' you boys, an' I ain't found the bosses as bad as you make 'em out. When they're makin' more, they'll pay us more."

"Oh, you go tell that to a Sunday school!" snorted Pete. "D'you ever hear of a boss payin' more wages'n he had to? Not much! Them kind 'o bosses's all doin' business up in heaven. If we was actually earnin' twenty a day, d'you suppose we'd get a cent more'n three seventy-five till we'd licked the bosses. You do – hey? That shows the kind of a nut you've got. The boss 'ud buy a

tutti-frutti yacht, or a few more automobiles, or mebbe a college or two, where they learn you how to wear your pants turned up; but all the extra money you'd get wouldn't pay for the soap used by a Dago. If ever a boss offers you an extra dollar before you've licked him, yell for a cop. He's crazy."

Pete's tirade completely flustered Johnson. "All the same, what I said's so."

Pete snorted again. "When d'you think you're livin'? You make me tired, Johnson. Go push yourself off the roof!"

The two last columns rose swinging above the chasm's brink, and there was no more talk for that afternoon. For the next hour the men were busy setting the last of the columns which were to support the twenty-second and twenty-third stories. Then they began setting in the cross beams, walking about on these five-inch beams (perhaps on one with the pavement straight beneath it) with the matter-of-fact steps of a man on the sidewalk – a circus act, lacking a safety net below, and lacking flourishes and kisses blown to a thrilled audience.

Chapter II
THE WALKING DELEGATE

It was toward the latter part of the afternoon that a tall, angular man, in a black overcoat and a derby hat, stepped from the ladder on to the loose planking, glanced about and walked over to the gang of men about the south crane.

"Hello, Buck," they called out on sight of him.

"Hello, boys," he answered carelessly.

He stood, with hands in the pockets of his overcoat, smoking his cigar, watching the crane accurately swing a beam to its place, and a couple of men run along it and bolt it at each end to the columns. He had a face to hold one's look – lean and long: gray, quick eyes, set close together; high cheek bones, with the dull polish of bronze; a thin nose, with a vulturous droop; a wide tight mouth; a great bone of a chin; – a daring, incisive, masterful face.

When the beam had been bolted to its place, Barry, with a reluctance he tried to conceal, walked over to Foley.

"How's things?" asked the new-comer, rolling his cigar into the corner of his mouth and slipping his words out between barely parted lips.

Barry was the steward on the job, – the union's representative. "Two snakes come on the job this mornin'," he reported. "Them two over there, – that Squarehead an' that Guinea. I was goin' to

write you a postal card about 'em to-night."

"Who put 'em to work?"

"They said Duffy, Driscoll's superintendent."

Foley grunted, and his eyes fastened thoughtfully on the two non-union men.

"When the boys seen they had no cards, o' course they said they wouldn't work with the scabs. But I said we'd stand 'em to-day, an' let you straighten it out to-morrow."

"We'll fix it now." The walking delegate, with deliberate steps, moved toward the two men, who were sitting astride an outside beam fitting in bolts.

He paused beside the Italian. "Clear out!" he ordered quietly. He did not take his hands from his pockets.

The Italian looked up, and without answer doggedly resumed twisting a nut.

Foley's eyes narrowed. His lips tightened upon his cigar. Suddenly his left hand gripped the head of a column and his right seized the shirt and coat collar of the Italian. He jerked the man outward, unseating him, though his legs clung about the beam, and held him over the street. The Italian let out a frightful yell, that the wind swept along under the clouds; and his wrench went flying from his hand. It struck close beside a mason on a scaffold seventeen stories below. The mason gave a jump, looked up and shook his fist.

"D'youse see the asphalt?" Foley demanded.

The man, whose down-hanging face was forced to see the

pavement far below, with the little hats moving about over it, shrilled out his fear again.

"In about a minute youse'll be layin' there, as flat as a picture, if youse don't clear out!"

The man answered with a mixture of Italian, English, and yells; from which Foley gathered that he was willing to go, but preferred to gain the street by way of the ladders rather than by the direct route.

Foley jerked him back to his seat, and a pair of frantic arms gripped his legs. "Now chase yourself, youse scab! Or – " Foley knew how to swear.

The Italian rose tremblingly and stepped across to the flooring. He dropped limply to a seat on a prostrate column, and moaned into his hands.

Without glancing at him or at the workmen who had eyed this measure doubtfully, Foley moved over to the Swede and gripped him as he had the Italian. "Now youse, youse sneakin' Squarehead! Get out o' here, too!"

The Swede's right hand came up and laid hold of Foley's wrist with a grip that made the walking delegate start. The scab rose to his feet and stepped across to the planking. Foley was tall, but the Swede out-topped him by an inch.

"I hold ma yob, yes," growled the Swede, a sudden flame coming into his heavy eyes.

Foley had seen that look in a thousand scabs' eyes before. He knew its meaning. He drew back a pace, pulled his derby hat

tightly down on his head and bit into his cigar, every lean muscle alert.

"Get off the job! Or I'll kick youse off!"

The Swede stepped forward, his shoulders hunched up. Foley crouched back; his narrowed gray eyes gleamed. The men in both gangs looked on from their places about the cranes and up on the beams in statued expectation. Barry and Pig Iron hurried up to Foley's support.

"Keep back!" he ordered sharply. They fell away from him.

A minute passed – the two men standing on the loosely-planked edge of a sheer precipice, watching each other with tense eyes. Suddenly a change began in the Swede; the spirit went out of him as the glow from a cooling rivet. His arms sank to his side, and he turned and fairly slunk over to where lay an old brown overcoat.

The men started with relief, then burst into a jeering laugh. Foley moved toward Barry, then paused and, with hands back in his pockets, watched the two scabs make their preparation to leave, trundling his cigar about with his thin prehensile lips. As they started down the ladder, the Swede sullen, the Italian still trembling, he walked over to them with sudden decision.

"Go on back to work," he ordered.

The two looked at him in surprised doubt.

"Go on!" He jerked his head toward the places they had left.

They hesitated; then the Swede lay off his old coat and started back to his place, and the Italian followed, his fearful eyes on the

walking delegate.

Foley rejoined Barry. "I'm goin' to settle this thing with Driscoll," he said to the pusher, loudly, answering the amazed questioning he saw in the eyes of all the men. "I'm goin' to settle the scab question for good with him. Let them two snakes work till youse hear from me."

He paused, then asked abruptly: "Where's Keating?"

"Down with the riveters."

"So-long, boys," he called to Barry's gang; and at the head of the ladder he gestured a farewell to the gang about the other crane. Then his long body sank through the flooring.

At the bottom of the thirty-foot ladder he paused and looked around through the maze of beams and columns. This floor was not boarded, as was the one he had just left. Here and there were little platforms on which stood small portable forges, a man at each turning the fan and stirring the rivets among the red coals; and here and there were groups of three men, driving home the rivets. At regular intervals each heater would take a white rivet from his forge, toss it from his tongs sizzling through the air to a man twenty feet away, who would deftly catch it in a tin can. This man would seize the glowing bit of steel with a pair of pincers, strike it smartly against a beam, at which off would go a spray of sparks like an exploding rocket, and then thrust it through its hole. Immediately the terrific throbbing of a pneumatic hammer, held hard against the rivet by another man, would clinch it to its destiny of clinging with all its might. And

then, flashing through the gray air like a meteor at twilight, would come another sparkling rivet.

And on all sides, beyond the workmen calmly playing at catch with white-hot steel, and beyond the black crosswork of beams and columns, Foley could see great stretches of housetops that in sullen rivalry strove to overmatch the dinginess of the sky.

Foley caught sight of Tom with a riveting gang at the southeast corner of the building, and he started toward him, walking over the five-inch beams with a practiced step, and now and then throwing a word at some of the men he passed, and glancing casually down at the workmen putting in the concrete flooring three stories below. Tom had seen him coming, and had turned his back upon his approach.

"H'are you, Buck!" shouted one of the gang.

Though Foley was but ten feet away, it was the man's lips alone that gave greeting to him; the ravenous din of the pneumatic hammer devoured every other sound. He shouted a reply; his lip movements signaled to the man: "Hello, fellows."

Tom still kept his ignoring back upon Foley. The walking delegate touched him on the shoulder. "I'd like to trade some words with youse," he remarked.

Tom's set face regarded him steadily an instant; then he said: "All right."

"Come on." Foley led the way across beams to the opposite corner of the building where there was a platform now deserted by its forge, and where the noise was slightly less dense. For

a space the two men looked squarely into each other's face – Tom's set, Foley's expressionless – as if taking the measure of the other; – and meanwhile the great framework shivered, and the air rattled, under the impact of the throbbing hammers. They were strikingly similar, and strikingly dissimilar. Aggressiveness, fearlessness, self-confidence, a sense of leadership, showed themselves in the faces and bearing of the two, though all three qualities were more pronounced in the older man. Their dissimilarity was summed up in their eyes: there was something to take and hold your confidence in Tom's; Foley's were full of deep, resourceful cunning.

"Well?" said Tom, at length.

"What's your game?" asked Foley in a tone that was neither friendly nor unfriendly. "Wha' d'youse want?"

"Nothing, – from you."

Foley went on in the same colorless tone. "I don't know. Youse've been doin' a lot o' growlin' lately. I've had a lot o' men fightin' me. Most of 'em wanted to be bought off."

Tom recognized in these words a distant overture of peace, – a peace that if accepted would be profitable to him. He went straight to Foley's insinuated meaning.

"You ought to know that's not my size," he returned quietly. "You've tried to buy me off more than once."

The mask went from Foley's face and his mouth and forehead creased into harsh lines. His words came out like whetted steel. "See here. I would pass over the kind o' talkin' youse've been

doin'. Somebody's always growlin'. Somebody's got to growl. But what youse said at the meetin' last night, I ain't goin' to stand for that kind o' talk. Youse understand?"

Tom's legs had spread themselves apart, his black-gloved hands had placed themselves upon his hips, and his brown eyes were looking hard defiance from beneath his cap's peak. "I don't suppose you did like it," he said calmly. "If I remember rightly I didn't say it for the purpose of pleasing you."

"Youse're goin' to keep your mouth goin' then?"

"My mouth's my own."

"Mebbe youse knows what happened to a few other gents that started on the road youse're travelin'?" the steely voice went on insinuatingly. "Duncan – Smith – O'Malley?"

"Threats, huh?" Tom's anger began to pass his control. He sneered. "Save 'em for somebody that's afraid of you!"

The cigar that had so far kept its place in Foley's mouth now fell out, and a few lurid words followed it. "D'youse know I can drive youse clean out o' New York? Yes, an' fix youse so youse can't get a job in the iron trade in the country? Except as a scab. Which's just about what you are!"

The defiant glow in Tom's eyes flared into a blaze of anger. He stepped up to Foley, his fists still on his hips, and fairly thrust his square face into the lean one of the walking delegate.

"If you think I'm afraid of you, Buck Foley, or your bunch of toughs, you're almighty mistaken! I'm going to say what I think about you, and say it whenever and wherever I please!"

Foley's face tightened. His hands clenched in his pockets. But he controlled himself. He had the wisdom of a thousand fights, – which is, never to fight unless you have to, or unless there is something to gain. "I've got just one thing to say to youse, an' that's all," he said, and his low, steely voice cut distinctly through the hammer's uproar. "If I hear any more about your talk, – well, Duncan an' O'Malley'll have some new company."

He turned about shortly, and stepped along beams to a ladder, and down that; leaving Tom struggling with a furious desire to follow and close with him. Out of the building, he made for the office of Mr. Driscoll as rapidly as street car could take him. On leaving the elevator in the Broadway building he strode to a door marked "Driscoll & Co. – Private – Enter Next Door," and without hesitation turned the knob. He found himself in a small room, very neat, whose principal furniture was a letter file and a desk bearing a typewriter. Over the desk was a brown print of William Morris. The room had two inner doors, one, as Foley knew, opening into the general offices, and the other into Mr. Driscoll's private room.

A young woman rose from the desk. "What is it?" she asked, with a coldness drawn forth by his disregard of the sign on the door.

"I want to see Mr. Driscoll. Tell him Foley wants to speak to him."

She went through Mr. Driscoll's door, and Foley heard his name announced. There was a hesitant silence, then he heard the

words, "Well, let him come in, Miss Arnold."

Miss Arnold immediately reappeared. "Will you step in, please."

As he entered the door Foley put on his hat, which he had removed in the presence of the secretary, pulling it aggressively down over one eye.

"Hello, Driscoll," he greeted the contractor, who had swung about from a belittered desk; and he closed the door behind him.

Mr. Driscoll pointed to a chair, but his face deepened a shade. Foley seated himself, and leaned forward with his elbows on his knees, his bony hands clasped.

"Well, what can I do for you?" queried Mr. Driscoll shortly.

Foley knew his man. He had met Mr. Driscoll many times at conferences with the Executive Committee of the Iron Employers' Association, and had read him as though he were large print. He noted with satisfaction the color in the contractor's face.

The walking delegate spoke with extreme deliberation. "I come around, *Mister* Driscoll, to find out what the hell youse mean by workin' scabs on that St. Etienne job. Youse signed an agreement to work only union men, but if I didn't watch youse, youse'd have your work alive with scabs. Now, damn youse, unless youse get them scabs off that job an' do it quicker'n youse ever done anything before, youse'll wish youse had!"

Foley made no mistake in his pre-calculation of the effect of this speech. Mr. Driscoll sprang to his feet, with a trembling that

his reddish-gray whiskers exaggerated. His glasses tumbled from his nose, and his feet scrunched them unnoted into the rug. "If there's a scab on the job, I didn't know it. If those men're scabs Duffy must have made a mistake. If – "

"If one o' youse bosses ever breaks a contract, oh, it's always a mistake!"

"If you'd come around here and talked like a gentleman, I'd had 'em off inside of an hour," Mr. Driscoll roared. "But, by thunder, I don't let any walking delegate insult me and tell me what I've *got* to do!"

"Then youse ain't goin' to fire the scabs?"

"Not till hell freezes over!"

Mr. Driscoll's eyes clicked, and he banged his pudgy fist upon his desk.

"Then the men'll go back to work on the day hell freezes over," returned Foley, rising to go. "But I have an idea youse'll want to see me a day or two before then. I've come to youse this time. The next time we talk, youse'll come to me. There's my card." And he went out with the triumphant feeling of the man who can guide events.

At ten o'clock the next morning he clambered again to the top of the St. Etienne Hotel. The Italian and Swede were still at work.

"Lay down your tools, boys!" he called out to the two gangs. "The job's struck!"

The men crowded around him, demanding information.

"Driscoll won't fire the scabs," he explained.

"Kick 'em off, – settle it that-a-way!" growled one of the men. "We can't afford to lose wages on account o' two scabs."

"That'd only settle this one case. We've got to settle the scab question with Driscoll for good an' all. It's hard luck, boys, I know," he said sympathetically, "but we can't do nothin' but strike. We've got to lick Driscoll into shape."

Leaving the men talking hotly as they changed their clothes for the street, Foley went down the ladder to bear the same message and the same comfort to the riveters.

The next morning the general contractor for the building got Mr. Driscoll on the telephone. "Why aren't you getting that ironwork up?" he demanded.

Mr. Driscoll started into an explanation of his trouble with Foley, but the general contractor cut him short. "I don't care what the trouble is. What I care about is that you're not getting that ironwork up. Get your men right back to work."

"How?" queried Mr. Driscoll sarcastically.

"That's your business!" answered the general contractor, and rang off.

Mr. Driscoll talked it over with the "Co.," a young fellow of thirty or thereabouts, of polished manner and irreproachable tailoring. "See Foley," Mr. Berman advised.

"It's simply a game for graft!"

"That may be," said the junior partner. "But what can you do?"

"I won't pay graft!"

Mr. Berman shrugged his shapely shoulders and withdrew.

Mr. Driscoll paced his office floor, tugged at his whiskers, and used some language that at least had the virtue of being terse. With the consequence, that he saw there was nothing for him but to settle as best as he could. In furious mortification he wrote to Foley asking him to call. The answer was a single scrawled sentence: "If you want to see me, I live at – West One Hundred and Fifteenth Street."

The instant after this note was read its fragments were in Mr. Driscoll's waste basket. He'd suffer a sulphurous fate before he'd do it! But the general contractor descended upon him in person, and there was a bitter half hour. The result was that late Saturday afternoon Mr. Driscoll locked his pride in his desk, put his checkbook in his pocket, and set forth for the number on West One Hundred and Fifteenth Street.

A large woman, of dark voluptuous beauty, with a left hand like a jeweller's tray, answered his knock and led him into the parlor, on whose furnishings more money than taste had been spent. The room was a war of colors, in which the gilt of the picture frames, enclosing oblongs of high-hued sentiment, had the best of the conflict, and in which baby blue, showing in pictures, upholstery and a fancy lamp shade, was an easy second, despite its infantility.

Foley sat in a swinging rocker, reading an evening paper, his coat off, his feet in slippers. He did not rise. "Hello! Are they havin' zero weather in hell?"

Mr. Driscoll passed the remark. "I guess you know what I'm

here for."

"If youse give me three guesses, I might be able to hit it. But chair bottom's as cheap as carpet. Set down."

Mr. Driscoll sank into an upholstered chair, and a skirmish began between his purple face and the baby blue of the chair's back. "Let's get to business," he said.

"Won't youse have a drink first?" queried Foley, with baiting hospitality.

Mr. Driscoll's hands clenched the arms of the chair. "Let's get to business."

"Well, – fire away."

"You know what it is."

"I can't say's I do," Foley returned urbanely.

The contractor's hands dug again into the upholstery. "About the strike you called on the St. Etienne."

"Oh, that! – Well?"

Mr. Driscoll gulped down pride and anger and went desperately to the point. "What'll I have to do to settle it?"

"Um! Le's see. First of all, youse'll fire the scabs?"

"Yes."

"Seems to me I give youse the chance to do that before, an' end it right there. But it can't end there now. There's the wages the men's lost. Youse'll have to pay waitin' time."

"Extortion, you mean," Mr. Driscoll could not refrain from saying.

"Waitin' time," Foley corrected blandly.

"Well, – how much?" Mr. Driscoll remarked to himself that he knew what part of the "waiting time" the men would get.

Foley looked at the ceiling and appeared to calculate. "The waitin' time'll cost youse an even thousand."

"What!"

"If youse ain't learnt your lesson yet, youse might as well go back." He made as if to resume his paper.

Mr. Driscoll swallowed hard. "Oh, I'll pay. What else can I do? You've got me in a corner with a gun to my head."

Foley did not deny the similitude. "youse're gettin' off dirt cheap."

"When'll the men go back to work?"

"The minute youse pay, the strike's off."

Mr. Driscoll drew out his check-book, and started to fill in a check with a fountain pen.

"Hold on there!" Foley cried. "No checks for me."

"What's the matter with a check?"

"Youse don't catch me scatterin' my name round on the back o' checks. D'youse think I was born yesterday?"

"Where's the danger, since the money's to go to the men for waiting time?" Mr. Driscoll asked sarcastically.

"It's cash or nothin'," Foley said shortly.

"I've no money with me. I'll bring it some time next week."

"Just as youse like. Only every day raises the price."

Mr. Driscoll made haste to promise to deliver the money Monday morning as soon as he could get it from his bank. And

Foley thereupon promised to have the men ready to go back to work Monday afternoon. So much settled, Mr. Driscoll started to leave. He was suffocating.

"Won't youse have a drink?" Foley asked again, at the door.

Mr. Driscoll wanted only to get out of Foley's company, where he could explode without having it put in the bill. "No," he said curtly.

"Well! – now me, when I got to swallow a pill I like somethin' to wash it down."

The door slammed, and Mr. Driscoll puffed down the stairs leaving behind him a trail of language like a locomotive's plume.

Chapter III
THE RISE OF BUCK FOLEY

Tom glared at Foley till the walking delegate had covered half the distance to the ladder, then he turned back to his supervision, trying to hide the fires of his wrath. But his soul flamed within him. All that Foley had just threatened, openly and by insinuation, was within his power of accomplishment. Tom knew that. And every other man in the union was as much at his mercy, – and every man's family. And many had suffered greatly, and all, except Foley's friends, had suffered some. Tom's mind ran over the injustice Foley had wrought, and over Foley's history and the union's history during the last few years … and there was no sinking of the inward fire.

And yet there was a long period in the walking delegate's history on which Tom would not have passed harsh judgment. Very early in his career, in conformity with prevailing custom, Buck Foley had had a father and a mother. His mother he did not remember at all. After she had intimated a preference for another man by eloping with him, Buck's father had become afflicted with almost constant unsteadiness in his legs, an affliction that had before victimized him only at intervals. His father he remembered chiefly from having carried a tin pail to a store around the corner where a red-faced man filled it and handed it

back to him over a high counter; and also from a white scar which even now his hair did not altogether conceal. One day his father disappeared. Not long after that Buck went to live in a big house with a great lot of boys, the little ones in checked pinafores, the big ones in gray suits. After six years of life here, at the age of twelve, he considered that he was fit for graduation, and so he went out into the world, – this on a very dark night when all in the big house were fast asleep.

For three years Buck was a newsboy; sleeping in a bed when he could afford one, sleeping in hallways, over warm gratings, along the docks, when he could not; winning all the newsboy's keen knowledge of human nature. At fifteen the sea fascinated him, and he lived in ships till he was twenty. Then a sailor's duties began to irk him. He came back to New York, took the first job that offered, driving a truck, and joined a political club of young men in a west side ward. Here he found himself. He rose rapidly to power in the club. Dan McGuire, the boss of the ward, had to take notice of him. He left his truck for a city job with a comfortable salary and nothing to do. At twenty-five he was one of McGuire's closest aids. Then his impatient ambition escaped his control. He plotted a revolution, which should overthrow McGuire and enthrone himself. But the Boss had thirty years of political cunning, and behind him a strong machine. For these Buck was no match. He took again to the sea.

Buck shipped as second mate on a steamer carrying steel for a great bridge in South Africa. Five years of authority had

unfitted him for the subordinate position of second mate, and there were many tilts with the thick-headed captain. The result was that after the steamer had discharged her cargo Foley quitted his berth and followed the steel into the interior. The contractors were in sore need of men, and, even though Foley was not a bridgeman, they gladly gave him a job. His service as a sailor had fitted him to follow, without a twinge of fear, the most expert of the bridgemen in their daring clambering about cables and over narrow steel beams; and being naturally skillful he rapidly became an efficient workman.

Of the men sent out to this distant job perhaps one-half were union members. These formed a local branch of their society, and this Foley was induced to join. He rapidly won to influence and power in the affairs of the union, finding here the same keen enjoyment in managing men that he had first tasted in Dan McGuire's ward. After the completion of this job he worked in Scotland and Brazil, always active in the affairs of his union. At thirty-two he found himself back in New York, – a forceful leader ripe for an opportunity.

He had not been in New York a week when he discovered his chance. The union there was wofully weak – an organization only in name. The employers hardly gave it a consideration; the members themselves hardly held it in higher esteem. The men were working ten hours a day for two dollars; lacking the support of a strong union they were afraid to seek better terms. As Foley grimly expressed it, "The bosses have got youse down

an' are settin' on your heads." Here in this utter disorganization Foley perceived his opportunity. He foresaw the extent to which the erection of steel-frame buildings, then in its beginning, was certain to develop. His trade was bound to become the "fundamental trade"; until his union had put up the steel frames the contractors could do nothing – the other workmen could do nothing. A strongly organized union holding this power – there was no limit to the concessions it might demand and secure.

It was a great opportunity. Foley went quietly to work on a job at twelve dollars a week, and bided his time. At the end of six months he was elected president and walking delegate of the union. He had no trouble in securing the offices. No one else wanted them. This was early in the spring. The first labor he set himself was the thorough organization of the union and the taking into its ranks of every ironworker in the city.

The following spring there was a strike. Foley now came for the first time before the contractors' attention. They regarded him lightly, having remembrance of his predecessors. But they soon found they were facing a man who, though uneducated and of ungrammatical speech, was as keen and powerful as the best of them. The strike was won, and great was the name of Foley. In the next three years there were two more strikes for increases in wages, which were won. And the name of Foley waxed greater.

During these first four years no man could have served the union better. But here ended the stretch of Foley's history on which Tom would not have passed harsh judgment; and here

began the period whose acts of corruption and oppression were now moving in burning procession through Tom's mind. It is a matter of no moment whether Foley or the employers took the initiative in starting him on the new phase of his career as a labor leader. It is axiomatic that money is the ammunition of war; among the employers there were many who were indifferent whether this ammunition was spent in fighting or in buying. On the other hand, Foley's training on the street and in Dan McGuire's ward was not such as to produce an incorruptible integrity. It is only fair to Foley to say that the first sums he received were in return for services which did not work any injury or loss to the union. It was easy to excuse to himself these first lapses. He knew his own worth; he saw that men of much less capacity in the employ of the bosses were paid big salaries. The union paid him thirty dollars a week. "Who's hurt if I increase my salary to something like it ought to be at the expense of the bosses?" he reasoned; and took the money with an easy conscience.

This first "easy money" made Foley hungry for more. He saw the many opportunities that existed for acquiring it; he saw where he could readily create other opportunities. In earlier days he had envied McGuire the chances that were his. He had no reason to envy McGuire now.

During the first three or four years of his administration there was no opposition to him within the union. His work was too strenuous to be envied him by any man. But after the union

had become an established power, and the position of walking delegate one of prominence, a few ambitious spirits began to aspire to his job. Also there began to be mutterings about his grafting. A party was formed which secretly busied itself with a plan to do to him what he had tried to do to Dan McGuire. He triumphed, as McGuire had triumphed. But the revolution, though unsuccessful, had a deep lesson for him. It taught him that, unless he fortified it, his position was insecure. At present he was dependent for its retention upon the favor of the members; and favor, as he knew, was not a dependable quantity.

He was determined to remain the walking delegate of the union. He had made the union, and the position. They were both his by right. He rapidly took measures to insure himself against the possibility of overthrow. He became relentless to all opposition. Those who dared talk were quick to hear from him. Some fared easily – the clever ones who were not bribe-proof. After being given jobs as foremen, and presented with neat little sums, they readily saw the justice of Foley's cause. Some, who were not worth bribing, he intimidated into silence. Those whom he had threatened and who still talked found themselves out of work and unable to get new jobs; they were forced into other trades or out of the city. A few such examples lessened the necessity for such severe action. Men with families to support perceived the value of a discreet tongue.

These methods were successful in quelling open opposition; but they, together with the knowledge that Foley was taking

money wherever it was offered, had the effect of rapidly alienating the better element in the union. This forced him into a close alliance with the rougher members, who were greatly in the minority. But this minority, never more than five hundred out of three thousand men, Foley made immensely effective. He instructed them to make the meetings as disorderly as possible. His scheme worked to perfection. The better members came less and less frequently, and soon the meetings were entirely in the hands of the roughs. As time passed Foley grew more and more jealous of his power, and more and more harsh in the methods used to guard it. He attached to himself intimately several of the worst of his followers whom grim facetiousness soon nominated "The Entertainment Committee." If any one attacked him now, the bold one did so knowing that he would probably experience the hospitality of these gentlemen the first dark night he ventured forth alone.

Such were the conditions behind the acts of tyranny that Tom furiously overhauled, as he mechanically directed the work. He had considered these conditions and acts before, but never with such fierceness as now. Hitherto he had been, as it were, merely one citizen, though a more or less prominent one, of an oppressed nation; now he, as an individual, had felt the tyrant's malevolence. He had before talked of the union's getting rid of Foley as a necessary action, and only the previous night he had gone to the length of denouncing Foley in open meeting, an adventurous act that had not been matched in the union for two years. Perhaps, in

the course of time, his patriotism alone would have pushed him to take up arms against Foley. But now to his patriotic indignation there was added the selfish wrath of the outraged individual, – and the sum was an impulse there was no restraining.

Tom was not one who, in a hot moment, for the assuagement of his wrath, would bang down his fist and consign himself to a purpose. Here, however, was a case where wrath made the same demand that already had been made by cool, moral judgment – the dethronement of Foley. And Tom felt in himself the power for its accomplishment. He was well furnished with self-confidence, – lacking which any man is an engine without fire. During the last five years – that is, since he was twenty-five, when he began to look upon life seriously – the knowledge had grown upon him that he was abler, and of stronger purpose, than his fellows. He had accepted this knowledge quietly, as a fact. It had not made him presumptuous; rather it had imposed upon him a serious sense of duty.

He considered the risks of a fight against Foley. Personal danger, – plenty of that, yes, – but his hot mind did not care for that. Financial loss, – he drew back from thinking what his wife would say; anyhow, there were his savings, which would keep them for awhile, if worst came to worst.

As the men were leaving the building at the end of the day's work, Tom drew Barry and Pete to one side. "I know you fellows don't like Foley a lot," he began abruptly, "but I don't know how far you're willing to go. For my part, I can't stand for him any

longer. Can't we get together to-night and have a talk?"

To this Barry and Pete agreed.

"Where'bouts?" asked Barry.

Tom hesitated; and he was thinking of his wife when he said, "How about your house?"

"Glad to have you," was Barry's answer.

Chapter IV
A COUNCIL OF WAR

Tom lived in the district below West Fourteenth Street, where, to the bewildered explorer venturing for the first time into that region, the jumbled streets seem to have been laid out by an egg-beater.

It was almost six o'clock when, hungry and wrathful, he thrust his latch-key into the door of his four-room flat. The door opened into blackness. He gave an irritated groan and groped about for matches, in the search striking his hip sharply against the corner of the dining table. A match found and the gas lit, he sat down in the sitting-room to await his wife's coming. From the mantel a square, gilded clock, on which stood a knight in full armor, counted off the minutes with irritating deliberation. It struck six; no Maggie. Tom's impatience rapidly mounted, for he had promised to be at Barry's at quarter to eight. He was on the point of going to a restaurant for his dinner, when, at half-past six, he heard the fumble of a latch-key in the lock, and in came his wife, followed by their son, a boy of four, crying from weariness.

She was a rather large, well-formed, and well-featured young woman, and was showily dressed in the extreme styles of the cheap department stores. She was pretty, with the prettiness of cheap jewelry.

Tom rose as she carefully placed her packages on the table. "You really decided to come home, did you?"

"Oh, I know I'm late," she said crossly, breathing heavily. "But it wasn't my fault. I started early enough. But there was such a mob in the store you couldn't get anywhere. If you'd been squeezed and pushed and punched like I was in the stores and in the street cars, well, you wouldn't say a word."

"Of course you had to go!"

"I wasn't going to miss a bargain of that kind. You don't get 'em often."

Tom gazed darkly at the two bulky packages, the cause of his delayed dinner. "Can I have something to eat, – and quick?"

By this time her hat and jacket were off. "Just as soon as I get back my breath," she said, and began to undo the packages.

The little boy came to her side.

"I'm so hungry, ma," he whined. "Gimme a piece."

"Dinner'll be ready in a little while," she answered carelessly.

"But I can't wait!" – and he began to cry.

Maggie turned upon him sharply. "If you don't stop that bawling, Ferdie, you shan't have a bite of dinner."

The boy cried all the louder.

"Oh, you!" she ejaculated; and took a piece of coarse cake from the cupboard and handed it to him. "Now do be still!"

Ferdinand filled his mouth with the cake, and she returned to the packages. "I been wanting something to fill them empty places at the ends of the mantel this long time, and when I saw

the advertisement in the papers this morning, I said it was just the thing… Now there!"

Out of one pasteboard box she had taken a dancing Swiss shepherdess, of plaster, pink and green and blue, and out of the other box a dancing Swiss shepherd. One of these peasants she had put on either side of the knight, at the ends of the mantel.

"Now, don't you like that?"

Tom looked doubtfully at the latest adornment of his home. Somehow, he didn't just like it, though he didn't know why. "I guess it'll do," he said at length.

"And they were only thirty-nine cents apiece! Now when I get a new tidy for the mantel, – a nice pink one with flowers. Just you wait!"

"Well, – but let's have dinner first."

"In just a minute." With temper restored by sight of her art treasures, Maggie went into the bedroom and quickly returned in an old dress. The dinner of round steak, fried potatoes and coffee was ready in a very short time. The steak avenged its hasty preparation by presenting one badly burnt side. But Tom ate the poor dinner without complaint. He was used to poor dinners; and his only desire was to get away and to Barry's.

Once during the meal he looked at his wife, a question in his mind. Should he tell her? But his eyes fell back to his plate and he said nothing. She must know some time, of course – but he didn't want the scene now.

But she herself approached uncomfortably near the subject.

She had glanced at him hesitatingly several times while they were eating; as he was rising from the table she began resolutely: "I met Mrs. Jones this afternoon. She told me what you said about Foley last night at the meeting. Her husband told her."

Tom paused.

"There's no sense doing a thing of that kind," she went on. "Here we are just beginning to have things a little comfortable. You know well enough what Foley can do to you if you get him down on you."

"Well?" Tom said guardedly.

"Well, don't you be that foolish again. We can't afford it."

"I'll see about it." He went into the sitting-room and returned with hat and overcoat on. "I'm going over to Barry's for awhile – on some business," he said, and went out.

Barry and Pete, who boarded with the Barrys, were waiting in the sitting-room when Tom arrived, – and with them sat Mrs. Barry and a boy of about thirteen and a girl apparently a couple of years younger, the two children with idle school books in their laps. Mrs. Barry's sitting-room, also her parlor, would not have satisfied that amiable lady, the president of the Society for Instructing Wage-Earners in House Furnishing. There was a coarse red Smyrna rug in the middle of the floor; a dingy, blue-flowered sofa, with three chairs to match (the sort seen in the windows of cheap furniture stores on bargain days, marked "Nineteen dollars for Set"); a table in one corner, bearing a stack of photographs and a glass vase holding up a bunch of pink

paper roses; a half dozen colored prints in gilt-and-white plaster frames. The room, however, quite satisfied Mrs. Barry, and the amiable president of the S. I. W. E. H. F. would needs have given benign approval to the room's utter cleanliness.

Mrs. Barry, a big, red-faced woman, greeted Tom heartily. Then she turned to the boy and girl. "Come on, children. We've got to chase ourselves. The men folks want to talk." She drove the two before her wide body into the kitchen.

Tom plunged into the middle of what he had to say. "We've talked about Foley a lot – all of us. We've said other unions are managed decently, honestly – why shouldn't ours be? We've said we didn't like Foley's bulldozing ways. We didn't like the tough gang he's got into the union. We didn't like the rough-house meetings. We didn't like his grafting. We've said we ought to raise up and kick him out. And then, having said that much, we've gone back to work – me, you and all the rest of us – and he's kept on bullying us, and using the union as a lever to pry off graft. I'm dead sick of this sort of business. For one, I'm tired talking. I'm ready for doing."

"Sure, we're all sick o' Foley. But what d'you think we ought to do?" queried Barry.

"Fire him out," Tom answered shortly.

"It only takes three words to say that," said Pig Iron. "But how?"

"Fire him out!" Tom was leaning forward in his chair, his elbows on his knees, his big, red hands interlocked. There was

determination in his square face, in the set of his powerful red neck, in the hunch of his big shoulders. He gazed steadily at the two men for a brief space. "Boys, my mind's made up. I'm going to fight him."

Pete and Barry looked at him in amazement.

"You're goin' to fight Buck Foley!" cried Barry.

"You're jokin'!" said Pig Iron.

"I'm in dead earnest."

"You know what'll happen to you if you lose?" queried Barry.

"Yes. And I know Foley may not even give me a chance to lose," Tom added grimly.

"You've got nerve to burn, Tom," said Pig Iron. "It's not an easy proposition. Myself, I'd as soon put on the gloves an' mix it up with the devil. An' to spit it right out on the carpet, Tom, I think Buck's done the union a lot o' good."

"You're right there, Pete. No one knows that better than I do. As you fellows know, I left town eight years ago and was bridging in the West four years. I was pretty much of a kid when I went away, but I was old enough to see the union didn't have enough energy left to die. When I came back and saw what Foley'd done, I thought he was the greatest thing that ever happened. If he'd quit right then the union'd 'a' papered the hall with his pictures. But you know how he's changed since then. The public knows it, too. Look how the newspapers have been shooting it into him. I'm not fighting Foley as he was four or five years ago, Pete, but Foley as he is now."

"There's no denyin' he's so crooked now he can't lay straight in bed," Pete admitted.

"We've got to get rid of him some time, haven't we?" Tom went on.

"Yes," the two men conceded.

"Or sooner or later he'll smash the union. That's certain. Now there's only one way to get rid of him. That's to go out after him, and go after him hard."

"But it's an awful risk for you, Tom," said Barry.

"Someone's got to take it if we ever get rid of Foley."

"One thing's straight, anyhow," declared Pete. "You're the best man in the union to go against Foley."

"Of course," said Barry.

Tom did not deny it.

There was a moment's silence. Then Pete asked: "What's your plan?"

"Election comes the first meeting in March. I'm going to run against him for walking delegate."

"If you care anything for my opinion," said Pete, "here it is: You've got about as much chance as a snowball in hell."

"You're away off, Pig Iron. You know as well as I do that five-sixths of the men in the union are against Foley. Why do they stand for him? Because they're unorganized, and he's got them bluffed out. If those men got together, Foley'd be the snowball. That's what I'm going to try to do, – get those men in line."

A door opened, and Mrs. Barry looked in. "I left my glasses

somewhere in there. Will I bother you men much if I look for 'em?"

"Not me," said Tom. "You can stay and listen if you want to."

Mrs. Barry sat down. "I suppose you don't mind tellin' us how you're goin' to get the men in line," said Pete.

"My platform's going to be an honest administration of the affairs of the union, and every man to be treated like a man. That's simple enough, ain't it? – and strong enough? And a demand for more wages. I'm going to talk these things to every man I meet. If they can kick Foley out, and get honest management and decent treatment, just by all coming out and voting, don't you think they're going to do it? They'll all fall in line."

"That demand for more wages is a good card. Our wage contract with the bosses expires May first, you know. The men all want more money; they need it; they deserve it. If I talk for it Foley'll be certain to oppose it, and that'll weaken him.

"I wanted to talk this over with you fellows to get your opinion. I thought you might suggest something. But even if you don't like the scheme, and even if you don't want to join in the fight, I'm going to stick it out. My mind's made up."

Tom sank back into his chair and waited for the two men to speak.

"Well, your scheme don't sound just like an insane asylum," Pete admitted. "Count me in."

Tom looked across at Barry. Barry's face was turned down and

his hands were inter-gripped. Tom understood. Barry had been out of work much during the last three years, and recent illness in the family had endowed him with debts. If he actively engaged in Tom's movement, and Foley triumphed, Foley's vengeance would see to it that Barry worked no more in New York. It was too great a risk to ask of a man situated as Barry was.

"I understand, Barry," said Tom. "That's all right. Don't you do it."

Barry made no answer.

Mrs. Barry put her hand on her husband's shoulder. "Jim, ain't we goin' to be in on this fight against Foley?"

"You know why, Mary." There was a catch in his voice.

"Yes. Because of me an' the kids. You, I know you've got as much nerve as anybody. We're goin' in, Jim. An' if we lose" – she tried to smile – "why, I ain't much of a consumptive, am I? I'll take in washin' to help out."

Tom turned his face about. Pete did the same, and their eyes met. Pete's face was set hard. He growled out something that sounded very much like an oath.

It was midnight when Tom left. The strike which Foley called on the St. Etienne Hotel the next day gave him time for much thinking about his campaign. He acquainted several of the more influential members of the union with his purpose, asking them to keep secret what he said till he was ready to begin an open fight. All gave him sympathy, but most of them hesitated when it came to promising active assistance. "Now if Foley only couldn't

do us out of our jobs, in case you lose, we'd be right with you. But – " Fear inclined them to let bad enough alone.

This set Tom to thinking again. On Monday evening – that afternoon Foley had ordered the men back to work on the St. Etienne Hotel – Tom announced a new plan to Barry and Pete. "We want to get every argument we can to use on the boys. It struck me we might make some use of the bosses. It's to their interest, as well as to ours, for us to have the right sort of delegate. If we could say that the bosses are sick of Foley and want us to get a decent man, and will guarantee to keep us at work no matter what Foley says, – that might have influence on some of the weak-kneed brothers."

"The boys'd say the bosses ain't runnin' the union," said Pete. "If you get the bosses on your side, the boys'll all stand by Foley."

"I thought of that. That's what'd happen if we got mixed up with anybody on the Executive Committee of the bosses except Baxter. The boys think Murphy, Bobbs, and Isaacs are pretty small potatoes, and they think Driscoll's not on the square. I guess it's a case of the pot calling the kettle black, but you know what Foley says about Driscoll. But with Baxter it's different. He's friendly to the union, and the boys know it. A word from him might help a lot. And he hates Foley, and Foley has no use for him. I've heard Buck say as much."

"It's worth tryin', anyhow," Pete and Barry agreed.

"Well, I'm going to brace him to-morrow after work," said Tom.

Chapter V
TOM SEEKS HELP FROM THE ENEMY

At the end of work the next day Tom joined the rush of men down the ladders and the narrow servants' stairways, the only ones in as yet, and on gaining the street made for the nearest saloon. Five cents invested in beer secured for him the liberty of the house. He washed himself, brushed his hair and clothing, and set forth for the office of Baxter & Co.

Baxter & Co. occupied one side of the tenth floor of a big downtown office building. Tom found himself in a large waiting-room, divided by a wooden railing, beyond which at a desk sat an imperious youth in a blue uniform.

"Is Mr. Baxter in?" Tom inquired.

The uniform noted that Tom's clothes were worn and wrinkled. "He's busy," it said stiffly.

"Is he in?"

"I s'pose he is."

"Well, you tell him I want to see him. Keating's my name. I'll wait if he's busy."

The uniform carelessly handed him a slip of paper. "Write down yer name an' business, an' I'll see if he'll see youse."

With a gleam in his eyes Tom took the printed form, wrote

his name and "on business of the Iron Workers' Union."

The boy accepted the slip and calmly read it. Tom gave him a push that sent him spinning. "Get a move on you, there! I'm in a hurry."

The boy gave a startled look back, and walked quickly down an alley that ran between two rows of offices. Tom sat down in one of the leather-bottomed chairs and with a show of coolness, but with inward excitement, waited his interview with Mr. Baxter. He had never met an employer in his life, save regarding his own work or as a member of a strike committee. And now the first he was to meet in a private interview was the most prominent employer in his trade – head of the big firm of Baxter & Co., and president of the Iron Employers' Association.

Several minutes passed before the uniform reappeared and led Tom into Mr. Baxter's office, a large, airy room with red burlap walls, cherry woodwork, cherry chairs, a long cherry table, a flat-top cherry desk. The room was absolutely without attempt at decoration, and was as clean as though it had been swept and dusted the minute before. The only piece of paper in the room was an architect's drawing of a façade, which Mr. Baxter was examining.

Mr. Baxter did not look up immediately. Tom, standing with hat in hand, was impressed with his busyness. He was not yet acquainted with the devices by which men of affairs fortify their importance.

Suddenly Mr. Baxter wheeled about in his chair. "I beg your

pardon. Be seated. What can I do for you?"

He was perhaps forty-five or fifty – slender, of high, narrow brow, steely eyes, and Vandyke beard. His neatness was equal to that of his office; he looked as though he were fresh from barber, haberdasher and tailor. Tom understood the success of the man in the first glance at his face: he was as quick to act upon the opportunity as a steel trap.

Tom sat down in one of the polished chairs, and affected composure by throwing his left arm across the cherry table. "I belong to the Iron Workers' Union. To come right to the point – "

"I shall be obliged if you will. I'm really very busy."

Mr. Baxter's tone was a model of courtesy. A more analytical man than Tom might have felt the distinction that it was the courtesy a gentlemen owes himself, not the courtesy one man owes another. Tom merely felt a vague antagonism, and that put him at his ease.

"I'm busy, too," he returned quietly. "What I've come to see you about is a matter which I consider of great importance to the bosses and the union. And I've come to see you because I know you are friendly to the union."

"I believe that in most cases the interests of the employers and the interests of the union are practically the same."

"And also because you don't like Foley."

Mr. Baxter fingered his narrow watch chain a moment. "So you've come to see me about Mr. Foley?"

"Yes. There's no use going into details with you, Mr. Baxter.

You know the sort Foley is as well as I do. He bullies the union. That's nothing to you. But he's not on the square with the bosses. That is. As you said awhile ago, the interests of the bosses and the union are the same. It's to the interest of both to get rid of Foley. That's so, ain't it?"

Mr. Baxter's face was inscrutable. "You're going to turn him out then?"

"We're going to try to."

"And what will be your policy then? – if you don't mind my asking it."

"To run things on the square."

"A praiseworthy purpose. Of course you'll put in a square man as delegate then."

"I'm going to run myself."

Tom thought he saw a significant look pass across Mr. Baxter's face. "Not because I'm anxious for his job," he hastened to explain. "But somebody's got to run against him."

Mr. Baxter nodded slightly. "I see. Not a very popular risk." His keen eyes never wavered from Tom's face. "How do you propose to defeat Foley? But don't tell me anything you don't want to."

Tom outlined his plans for organizing the better element against Foley.

"That sounds feasible," was Mr. Baxter's comment when Tom had concluded. His eyes were still fastened on Tom's face. "And after you win, there'll be a strike?"

This question, asked quietly but with electrical quickness, caught Tom unprepared. He floundered an instant. "We've got to bridge two or three rivers before we come to that one," he answered.

Mr. Baxter hardly moved an eyelash. "That's obvious. And now, aside from the benefit which we are to secure by the change, how does your plan concern me?"

"Since you are going to profit by the fight, if we win, I thought you might help us. And you can do it easy enough. One thing that'll keep a lot of the members from joining in the fight is that they're afraid, if Foley wins out, he'll get 'em all fired. Now if you'll simply guarantee that you'll stand by the men, why, they'll all come out against Foley and we'll beat him five to one. There'll be no chance for us to lose."

Mr. Baxter's white brow wrinkled in thought. Tom waited his words in suspense. At length he spoke.

"You will readily realize, Mr. Keating, that it is an almost unprecedented step for us to take such a part in the affairs of a union. Your suggestion is something I must think about."

Tom had been certain Mr. Baxter would fall in with his scheme enthusiastically. It required so little, merely his word, and assured so much. Mr. Baxter's judicial reception of his plan shot him through with disappointment.

"What, don't it appeal to you?" he cried.

"It certainly seems full of promise."

"It will clear us of Foley – certain! And it is to the interest of

both of us that the union be run on the square."

"That's true, – very true. But the most I can say to you now, Mr. Keating, is that I'll take the matter under advisement. Come to see me again in a few days."

Mr. Baxter began to finger the drawing on his desk, whereby Tom knew the interview was at an end. Greatly dashed, but somewhat reassured by the contractor's last words, he said good-afternoon and withdrew. The uniform respectfully opened the gate in the railing. In the uniform's book of wisdom it was writ down that anyone who could be closeted with your boss was deserving of courtesy.

The instant the office door closed on Tom's back Mr. Baxter quickly rose and paced the floor for several minutes. Then he sat down at his desk, took a sheet of paper from a drawer, and dashed off a note to Foley.

Mr. Baxter did not rise to greet Foley when the walking delegate entered his office the next afternoon. "Mr. Foley," he said, with a short nod of his head.

"Youse guessed my name," said Foley, cooly helping himself to a chair. "What's doin'?"

The two men watched each other narrowly, as might two enemies who have established a truce, yet who suspect treachery on the part of the other. There was a distant superiority in the manner of Mr. Baxter, – and also the hardly concealed strain of the man who, from policy or breeding, would be polite where he loathes. Foley, tilted back in his chair, matched this manner with

an air of defiant self-assertion.

Mr. Baxter rapidly sketched the outline of what Tom had said to him.

"And so Keating come to youse for help," grinned Foley. "That ain't bad!"

Mr. Baxter did not recognize Foley's equality by smiling. "I thought it to your interest to let you know this at once, for – "

"And to your interest, too."

"I knew you were not particularly desirous of having Mr. Keating elected," he continued.

"I'm just about as anxious as youse are," said Foley promptly. "Anyhow," he added carelessly, "I already knew what youse told me." Which he did not.

"Then my sending for you and telling you has served no purpose." The coldness of his voice placed a wide distance between himself and the walking delegate.

Foley perceived the distance, and took a vindictive pleasure in bridging it with easy familiarity. "Not at all, Baxter. It gives youse a chance to show how much youse like me, an' how much youse've got the interest o' the union at heart."

The lean, sarcastic face nettled Mr. Baxter. "I think my reputation speaks for my interest in the union," he said stiffly.

"Your interest in the union!" Foley laughed.

No man had ever seen Mr. Baxter lose his self-control; but he was as near losing it now as he had ever been, else he would not have made so weak a rejoinder.

"My reputation speaks for my interest," he repeated. "You won't find a man in your union but that'll say I'm the union's friend."

Foley laughed again – a harsh, biting laugh. "An' why do they say it, eh? Because I told 'em so. An' youse've got the nerve, Baxter, to sit there an' talk that rot to me! – me, the man that made youse!"

"Made me!"

Foley's heart leaped to see the wrathful color flame in the white cheek of the suave and collected Mr. Baxter – to see the white shapely hands twitch.

"Yes, made youse!" And he went on with his grim pleasure. "Youse're doin' twice the business youse were three years ago. Why did youse get the contracts for the Atwell building and the Sewanee Hotel – the two jobs that put youse at the head o' things in New York? Because Driscoll, Bobbs, an' some o' the others had failed to get the jobs they were workin' on done in contract time. An' why didn't they get done on time? Because youse didn't want 'em to get through on time. I saw that they got bum men, who made mistakes, – an' I give 'em their bellyful o' strikes."

"You didn't do these things out of love for me," Mr. Baxter put in meaningly. He was getting himself in hand again.

"Sure, I didn't, – not any more'n youse told me about Keating for love o' me."

Foley went on. "The men who want buildings put up have found youse get through on time, an' the others don't – so youse

get the business. Why do youse get through on time? Because I see youse get the fastest men in the union. An' because I see youse don't have any labor trouble."

"Neither of which you do solely for love."

"Sure not. Now don't youse say again I haven't made youse. An' don't give me that hot air about bein' friendly to the union. Three years ago youse seen clearer than the others that youse bosses was bound to lose the strike. Youse'd been fightin' the union till then, an' not makin' any more'n the rest o' the bosses. So youse tried a new game. Youse led the other bosses round to give in, an' got the credit o' bein' a friend o' the union. I know how much youse like the union!"

"Pardon me if I fail to see the purpose of all this retrospection," said Mr. Baxter sarcastically.

"I just wanted to remind youse that I'm on to youse from hair to toenails – that's all," Foley answered calmly.

"I think it would be wiser to confine our conversation to the matter in hand," said Mr. Baxter coldly. "Mr. Keating said he was certain to beat you. What chance does he have of being elected?"

"The same as youse."

"And a strike, – how about that?"

"It follows if I'm elected, don't it, there'll not be any strike."

"That's according to our agreement," said Mr. Baxter.

"No," said Foley, as he rose, "Keating ain't goin' to trouble youse much." A hard look came over his face. "Nor me."

Chapter VI
IN WHICH FOLEY PLAYS WITH TWO MICE

Foley left Mr. Baxter's office with the purpose of making straight for the office of Mr. Driscoll; but his inborn desire to play with the mouse caused him to change the direct road to an acute angle having at its apex the St. Etienne Hotel. He paused a moment to look up at the great black skeleton, – a lofty scaffolding that might have been erected for some mural painter ambitious to fresco his fame upon the sky. He saw the crane swing a beam to its place between two of the outside columns, and saw a man step upon its either end to bolt it to its place. Suddenly the crane jerked up the beam, and the men frantically threw their arms around it. As suddenly the crane lowered it. It struck upon the head of a column. Foley saw one man fly from the beam, catch hold of the end of a board that extended over the edge of the building, hang there; saw the beam, freed in some manner from the pulley hook, start down, ridden by one man; and then saw it come whirling downward alone.

"Look out!" he shouted with all his lungs.

Pedestrians rushed wildly from beneath the shed which extended, as a protection to them, over the sidewalk. Horses were jerked rearing backwards. The black beam crashed through the

shed and through the pine sidewalk. Foley dashed inside and for the ladder.

Up on the great scaffolding hands had seized the wrists of the pendant man and lifted him to safety. All were now leaning over the platform's edge, gazing far down at the ragged hole in the shed.

"D'you see Pete?" Tom asked at large, in a strained voice.

There were several noes.

"That was certainly the last o' Pig Iron," muttered one of the gang.

He was not disputed.

"It wasn't my fault," said the signalman, as pale as paper. "I didn't give any wrong signals. Someone below must 'a' got caught in the rope."

"I'm going down," said Tom; and started rapidly for the ladder's head – to be met with an ascending current of the sort of English story books ascribe to pirates. Pete's body followed the words so closely as to suggest a possible relation between the two. Tom worked Pete's hand. The men crowded up.

"Now who the" – some pirate words – "done that?" Pete demanded.

"It was all an accident," Tom explained.

"But I might 'a' been kilt!"

"Sure you might," agreed Johnson sympathetically.

"How is it you weren't?" Tom asked.

"The beam, in whirlin' over, swung the end I was on into the

floor below. I grabbed a beam an' let it travel alone. That's all."

Foley, breathing deeply from his rapid climb, emerged this instant from the flooring, and walked quickly to the group. "Anybody kilt?" he asked.

The particulars of the accident were given him. "Well, boys, youse see what happens when youse got a foreman that ain't onto his job."

Tom contemptuously turned his back and walked away.

"I don't see why Driscoll don't fire him," growled Jake.

"Who knows what'll happen!" Foley turned a twisted, knowing look about the group. "He's been talkin' a lot!"

He walked over to where Tom stood watching the gang about the north crane. "I'm dead onto your game," he said, in a hard, quiet voice, his eyes glittering.

Tom was startled. He had expected Foley to learn of his plan, but thought he had guarded against such an early discovery. "Well?" he said defiantly.

Foley began to play with his mouse. "I guess youse know things'll begin to happen." He greedily watched Tom's face for signs of inward squirming. "Remember the little promise I made youse t'other day? Buck Foley usually keeps his promises, don't he – hey?"

But the mouse refused to be played with. "The other beam, boys," it called out to three men, and strode away toward them.

Foley watched Tom darkly an instant, and then turned sharply about. At the ladder's head Jake stopped him.

"Get him fired, Buck. Here's your chance to get me that foreman's job you promised me."

"We'll see," Foley returned shortly, and passed down the ladder and along the other leg of the angle to the office of Driscoll & Co. He gave his name to Miss Arnold. She brought back the message that he should call again, as Mr. Driscoll was too busy to see him.

"Sorry, miss, but I guess I'm as busy as he is. I can't come again." And Foley brushed coolly past her and entered Mr. Driscoll's office.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Driscoll," he said, showing his yellow teeth in a smile, and helping himself to a chair. "Nice afternoon, ain't it?"

Mr. Driscoll wheeled angrily about in his chair. "I thought I sent word to you I was too busy to see you?"

"So youse did, Mr. Driscoll. So youse did."

"Well, I meant it!" He turned back to his desk.

"I s'pose so," Foley said cheerfully. He tilted back easily in his chair, and crossed his legs. "But, youse see, I could hardly come again, an' I wanted very much to see youse."

Mr. Driscoll looked as though he were going to explode. But fits of temper at a thousand dollars a fit were a relief that he could afford only now and then. He kept himself in hand, though the effort it cost him was plain to Foley.

"What d'you want to see me about? Be in a hurry. I'm busy."

The point of Foley's tongue ran gratified between his thin lips,

as his eyes took in every squirm of this cornered mouse. "In the first place, I come just in a social way. I wanted to return the calls youse made on me last week. Youse see, I been studyin' up etiquette. Gettin' ready to break into the Four Hundred."

"And in the second place?" snapped Mr. Driscoll.

Foley stepped to the office door, closed it, and resumed his back-tilted seat. "In the second place, I thought I'd like to talk over one little point about the St. Etienne job."

Mr. Driscoll drew a check-book out of a pigeon-hole and dipped his pen. "How much this time?"

The sarcasm did not touch Foley. He made a wide negative sweep with his right arm. "What I'm goin' to tell youse won't cost youse a cent. It's as free as religion." The point of red again slipped between his lips.

"Well? – I said I was busy."

"Well, here it is: Don't youse think youse got a pretty bum foreman on the St. Etienne job?"

"What business is that of yours?"

"Won't youse talk in a little more of a Christian spirit, Mr. Driscoll?"

It was half a minute before Mr. Driscoll could speak in any kind of a spirit. "Will you please come to the point!"

"Why, I'm there already," the walking delegate returned sweetly. "As I was sayin', don't youse think your foreman on the St. Etienne job is a pretty bum outfit?"

"Keating? – I never had a better."

"D'youse think so? Now I was goin' to suggest, in a friendly way, that youse get another man in his place."

"Are you running my business, or am I?"

"If youse'd only talk with a little more Christian – "

The eyes clicked. The members of the church to which Mr. Driscoll belonged would have stuffed fingers into their horrified ears at the language in which Foley was asked to go to a place that was being prepared for him.

Foley was very apologetic. "I'm too busy now, an' I don't get my vacation till August. Then youse ain't goin' to take my advice?"

"No! I'm not!"

The walking delegate stopped purring. He leaned forward, and the claws pushed themselves from out their flesh-pads. "Let's me and youse make a little bet on that, Mr. Driscoll. Shall we say a thousand a side?"

Driscoll's eyes and Foley's battled for a moment. "And if I don't do it?" queried Mr. Driscoll, abruptly.

"I don't like to disturb youse by talkin' about unpleasant things. It would be too bad if you didn't do it. Youse really couldn't afford any more delays on the job, could youse?"

Mr. Driscoll made no reply.

Foley stood up, again purring. "It's really good advice, ain't it? I'll send youse round a good man in the mornin' to take his place. Good-by."

As Foley passed out Mr. Driscoll savagely brushed the papers

before him to one side of his desk, crushing them into a crumpled heap, and sat staring into the pigeon-holes. He sent for Mr. Berman, who after delivering an opinion in favor of Foley's proposition, departed for his own office, pausing for a moment to lean over the desk of the fair secretary. Presently, with a great gulp, Mr. Driscoll touched a button on his desk and Miss Arnold appeared within the doorway. She was slender, but not too slender. Her heavy brown hair was parted in the middle and fell over either end of her low, broad forehead. The face was sensitive, sensible, intellectual. Persons chancing into Mr. Driscoll's office for the first time wondered how he had come by such a secretary.

"Miss Arnold, did you ever see a jelly fish?" he demanded.

"Yes."

"Well, here's another."

"I can't say I see much family resemblance," smiled Miss Arnold.

"It's there, all right. We ain't got any nerve."

"It seems to me you are riding the transmigration of soul theory at a pretty hard pace, Mr. Driscoll. Yesterday, when you upset the bottle of ink, you were a bull in a china shop, you know."

"When you know me a year or two longer, you'll know I'm several sorts of dumb animals. But I didn't call you to give you a natural history lecture. Get Duffy on the 'phone, will you, and tell him to send Keating around as soon as he can. Then come in

and take some letters that I want you to let me have just as quick as you can get them off."

Two hours later Tom appeared in Miss Arnold's office. She had seen him two or three times when he had come in on business, and had been struck by his square, open face and his confident bearing. She now greeted him with a slight smile. "Mr. Driscoll is waiting for you," she said; and sent him straight on through the next door.

Mr. Driscoll asked Tom to be seated and continued to hold his bulging eyes on a sheet of paper which he scratched with a pencil. Tom, with a sense of impending disaster, sat waiting for his employer to speak.

At length Mr. Driscoll wheeled about abruptly. "What d'you think of Foley?"

"I've known worse men," Tom answered, on his guard.

"You must have been in hell, then! You think better of him than I do. And better than he thinks of you. He's just been in to see me. He wants me to fire you."

Tom had half-guessed this from the moment Duffy had told him Mr. Driscoll wanted him, but nevertheless he was startled by its announcement in words. He let several seconds pass, the while he got hold of himself, then asked in a hard voice: "And what are you going to do?"

Mr. Driscoll knew what he was going to do, but his temper insisted on gratification before he told his plan. "What can I do?" he demanded testily. "It's your fault – the union's fault. And I

don't have any sympathy to waste for anything that happens to any of you. Why don't you put a decent man in as your business agent?"

Tom passed all this by. "So you're going to fire me?"

"What else can I do?" Mr. Driscoll reiterated.

"Hasn't my work been satisfactory?"

"It isn't a question of work. If it's any satisfaction to you, I'll say that I never had a foreman that got as much or as good work out of the men."

"Then you're firing me because Foley orders you to?" There were both pity and indignation in Tom's voice.

Mr. Driscoll had expected to put his foreman on the defensive; instead, he found himself getting on that side. "If you want it right out, that's it. But what can I do? I'm held up."

"Do?" Tom stood up before his employer, neck and face red, eyes flashing. "Why, fight him!"

"I've tried that" – sarcastically – "thanks."

"That's what's the matter with you bosses! You think more of dollars than you do of self-respect!"

Mr. Driscoll trembled. "Young man, d'you know who you're talking to?"

"I do!" Tom cried hotly. "To the man who's firing me because he's too cowardly to stand up for what's right!"

Mr. Driscoll glared, his eyes clicked. Then he gave a great swallow. "I guess you're about right. But if I understand the situation, I guess there's a lot of men in your union that'd rather

hold their jobs than stand up for what's right."

Tom, in his turn, had his fires drawn. "And I guess you're about right, too," he had to admit.

"I may be a coward," Mr. Driscoll went on, "but if a man puts a gun to my head and says he'll pull the trigger unless I do what he says, I've got to do it, that's all. And I rather guess you would, too. But let's pass this by. I've got a plan. Foley can make me put you off one job, but he can't make me fire you. Let's see; I'm paying you thirty a week, ain't I?"

"That's it."

"Well, I'm going to give you thirty-five a week and put you to work in the shop as a superintendent. Foley can't touch you there, – or me either. Isn't that all right?" Mr. Driscoll wore a look of half-hearted triumph.

Tom had regarded Mr. Driscoll so long with dislike that even this proposal, apparently uttered in good faith, made him suspicious. He began to search for a hidden motive.

"Well?" queried Mr. Driscoll impatiently.

He could find no dishonest motive. "But if I took the job I'd have to go out of the union," he said finally.

"It oughtn't break your heart to quit Foley's company."

Tom walked to the window and looked meditatively into the street. Mr. Driscoll's offer was tempting. It was full of possibilities that appealed to his ambition. He was confident of his ability to fill this position, and was confident that he would develop capacity to fill higher positions. This chance would prove

the first of a series of opportunities that would lead him higher and higher, – perhaps even to Mr. Driscoll's own desk. He knew he had it in him. And the comfort, even the little luxuries, the broader opportunities for self-development that would be his, all appealed to him. And he was aware of the joy this new career would give to Maggie. But to leave the union – to give up the fight —

He turned back to Mr. Driscoll. "I can't do it."

"What!" cried the contractor in amazement.

"I can't do it," Tom repeated.

"Do you know what you're throwing away? If you turned out well, and I know you would, why there'd be no end of chances for advancement. I've got a lot of weak men on my pay-roll."

"I understand the chance, Mr. Driscoll. But I can't take it. Do you know why Foley's got it in for me?"

"He don't like you, I suppose."

"Because he's found out, somehow, that I've begun a fight on him, and am going to try to put him out of business. If I take this job, I've got to drop the fight. And I'll never do that!" Tom was warming up again. "Do you know the sort Foley is? I suppose you know he's a grafter?"

"Yes. So does my pocket-book."

"And so does his pocket-book. His grafting alone is enough to fight him on. But there's the way he treats the union! You know what he's done to me. Well, he's done that to a lot of others. He's got some of us scared so we're afraid to breathe. And the union's

just his machine. Now d'you suppose I'm going to quit the union in that shape?" He brought his big red fist thundering down on the desk before Mr. Driscoll. "No, by God! I'm going to stick by the boys. I've got a few hundred saved. They'll last me a while, if I can't get another job. And I'm going to fight that damned skate till one of us drops!"

Miss Arnold had come in the moment before with letters for Mr. Driscoll's signature, and had stood through Tom's outburst. She now handed the letters to Mr. Driscoll, and Tom for the first time noticed her presence. It struck him full of confusion.

"I beg pardon, miss. I didn't know you were here. I – I hope you didn't mind what I said."

"If Miss Arnold objects to what you said, I'll fire her!" put in Mr. Driscoll.

The secretary looked with hardly-concealed admiration at Tom, still splendid in the dying glow of his defiant wrath. "If I objected, I'd deserve to be fired," she said. Then she added, smiling: "You may say it again if you like."

After Miss Arnold had gone out Mr. Driscoll looked at Tom with blinking eyes. "I suppose you think you're some sort of a hero," he growled.

Tom's sudden confusion had collapsed his indignation. "No, I'm a man looking for a job," he returned, with a faint smile.

"Well, I'm glad you didn't take the job I offered you. I can't afford to let fools help manage my business."

Tom took his hat. "I suppose this is all," he said and started

for the door.

"Hold on!" Mr. Driscoll stood up. "Why don't you shake hands with a man, like a gentleman? There. That's the stuff. I want to say to you, Keating, that I think you're just about all right. If ever you want a job with me, just come around and say so and I'll give you one if I have to fire myself to make a place for you. And if your money gives out, or you need some to use in your fight, why I ain't throwing much away these days, but you can get all you want by asking for it."

Chapter VII
GETTING THE MEN IN LINE

His dismissal had been one of the risks Tom had accepted when he had decided upon war, and though he felt it keenly now that it had come, yet its chief effect was to intensify his resolution to overturn Buck Foley. He strode on block after block, with his long, powerful steps, his resolution gripping him fiercer and fiercer, – till the thought leaped into his mind: "I've got to tell Maggie."

He stopped as though a cold hand had been laid against his heart; then walked on more slowly, considering how he should give the news to her. His first thought was to say nothing of his dismissal for a few days. By then he might have found another job, and the telling that he had lost one would be an easy matter. But his second thought was that she would doubtless learn the news from some of her friends, and would use her tongue all the more freely because of his attempt at concealment; and, furthermore, he would be in the somewhat inglorious position of the man who has been found out. He decided to have done with it at once.

When he entered his flat Maggie looked up in surprise from the tidy on which she was working. "What! home already!" Then she noticed his face. "Why, what's the matter?"

Tom drew off his overcoat and threw it upon the couch. "I've been fired."

She looked at him in astonishment. "Fired!"

"Yes." He sat down, determined to get through with the scene as quickly as possible.

For the better part of a minute she could not speak. "Fired? What for?" she articulated.

"It's Foley's work. He ordered Driscoll to."

"You've been talking about Foley some more, then?"

"I have."

Tom saw what he had feared, a hard, accusing look spread itself over her face. "And you've done that, Tom Keating, after what I, your wife, said to you only last week? I told you what would happen. I told you Foley would make us suffer. I told you not to talk again, and you've gone and done it!" The words came out slowly, sharply, as though it were her desire to thrust them into him one by one.

Tom began to harden, as she had hardened. But at least he would give her the chance to understand him. "You know what Foley's like. You know some of the things he's done. Well, I've made up my mind that we oughtn't to stand him any longer. I'm going to do what I can to drive him out of the union."

"And you've been talking this?" she cut in. "Oh, of course you have! No wonder he got you fired! Oh, my God! I see it all. And you, you never thought once of your wife or your child!"

"I did, and you'll see when I tell you all," Tom said harshly.

"But would you have me stand for all the dirty things he does?"

"Couldn't you keep out of his way – as I asked you to? Because a wolf's a wolf, that's no reason why you should jump in his mouth."

"It is if you can do him up. And I'm going to do Foley up. I'm going to run against him as walking delegate. The situation ain't so bad as you think," he went on, with a weak effort to appease her. "You think things look dark, but they're going to be brighter than they ever were. I'll get another job soon, and after the first of March I'll be walking delegate. I'm going to beat Buck Foley, sure!"

For a moment the vision of an even greater elevation than the one from which they were falling made her forget her bitter wrath. Then it flooded back upon her, and she put it all into a laugh. "You beat Buck Foley! Oh, my!"

Her ireful words he had borne with outward calm; he had learned they were borne more easily, if borne calmly. But her sneering disbelief in him was too much. He sprang up, his wrath tugging at its leash. She, too, came to her feet, and stood facing him, hands clenched, breast heaving, sneering, sobbing. Her words tumbled out.

"Oh, you! you! Brighter days, you say. Ha! ha! You beat Buck Foley? Yes, I know how! Buck Foley'll not let you get a job in your trade. You'll have to take up some other work – if you can get it! Begin all over! We'll grow poorer and poorer. We'll have to eat anything. I'll have to wear rags. Just when we were getting

comfortable. And all because you wouldn't pay any attention to what I said. Because you were such a fo-o-ol! Oh, my God! My God!"

As she went on her voice rose to a scream, broken by gasps and sobs. At the end she passionately jerked Tom's coat and hat from the couch and threw herself upon it – and the frenzied words tumbled on, and on.

Tom looked down upon her a moment, quivering with wrath and a nameless sickness. Then he picked up hat and coat, and glancing at Ferdinand, who had shrunk terrified into a corner, walked quickly out of the flat.

He strode about the streets awhile, had dinner in a restaurant, and then, as Wednesday was the union's meeting night, he went to Potomac Hall. It fell out that he met Pete and Barry entering as he came up.

"I guess you'll have another foreman to-morrow, boys," he announced; and he briefly told them of his discharge.

"It'll be us next, Rivet Head," said Pete.

Barry nodded, his face pale.

All the men in the hall learned that evening what had happened to Tom, some from his friends, more from Foley's friends. And the manner of the latter's telling was a warning to every listener. "D'you hear Keating has been fired?" "Fired? No. What for?" A wise wink: "Well, he's been talkin' about Foley, you know."

Tom grew hot under, but ignored, the open jeering of the

Foleyites. The sympathy of his friends he answered with a quiet, but ominous, "Just you wait!" There were few present of the men he had counted on seeing, and soon after the meeting ended, which was unusually early, he started home.

It was after ten when he came in. Maggie sat working at the tidy; she did not look up or speak; her passion had settled into resentful obstinacy, and that, he knew from experience, only time could overcome. He had not the least desire to assist time in its work of subjection, and passed straight into their bedroom.

Tom felt her sustained resentment, as indeed he could not help; but he did not feel that which was the first cause of the resentment – her lack of sympathetic understanding of him. At twenty-three he had come into a man's wages, and Maggie's was the first pretty face he had seen after that. The novelty of their married life had soon worn off, and with the development of his stronger qualities and of her worst ones, it had gradually come about that the only thoughts they shared were those concerning their common existence in their home. Tom had long since become accustomed to carrying his real ideas to other ears. And so he did not now consciously miss wifely sympathy with his efforts.

There was no break the next morning in Maggie's sullen resentment. After an almost wordless breakfast Tom set forth to look for another job. An opening presented itself at the first place he called. "Yes, it happens we do need a foreman," said the contractor. "What experience have you had?"

Tom gave an outline of his course in his trade, dwelling on the last two years and a half that he had been a foreman.

"Um, – yes. That sounds very good. You say you worked last for Driscoll on the St. Etienne job?"

"Yes."

"I suppose you don't mind telling why you left? Driscoll hasn't finished that job yet."

Tom briefly related the circumstances.

"So you're out with Foley." The contractor shook his head. "Sorry. We need a man, and I guess you're a good one. But if Foley did that to Driscoll, he'll do the same to me. I can't afford to be mixed up in any trouble with him."

This conversation was a more or less accurate pattern of many that followed on this and succeeding days. Tom called on every contractor of importance doing steel construction work. None of them cared to risk trouble with Foley, and so Tom continued walking the streets.

One contractor – the man for whom he had worked before he went on the St. Etienne job – offered Tom what he called some "business advice." "I'm a pretty good friend of yours, Keating, for I've found you all on the level. The trouble with you is, when you see a stone wall you think it was put there to butt your head against. Now, I'm older than you are, and had a lot more experience, and let me tell you it's a lot easier, and a lot quicker, when you see trouble across your path like a stone wall, to go round it than it is to try to butt it out of your way. Stop butting

against Foley. Make up with him, or go to some other city. Go round him."

In the meantime Tom was busy with his campaign against Foley. He was discharged on the fourteenth of February; the election came on the seventh of March; only three weeks, so haste was necessary. On the days he was tramping about for a job he met many members of the union also looking for work, and to these he talked wherever he found them. And every night he was out talking to the men, in the streets, in saloons, in their own homes.

The problem of his campaign was a simple one – to get at least five hundred of the three thousand members of the union to come to the hall on election night and cast their votes against Foley. His campaign, therefore, could have no spectacular methods and no spectacular features. Hard, persistent work, night after night – that was all.

On the evening after the meeting and on the following evening Tom had talks with several leading men in the union. A few joined in his plan with spirit. But most that he saw held back; they were willing to help him in secret, but they feared the result of an open espousal of his cause. There were only a dozen men, including Barry and Pete, who were willing to go the whole way with him, and these he formed loosely into a campaign committee. They held a caucus and nominations for all offices were made, Tom being chosen to run for walking delegate and president. The presidency was unsalaried, and during Foley's

régime had become an office of only nominal importance; all real power that had ever belonged to the position had been gradually absorbed by the office of walking delegate. At the meeting on the twenty-first Tom's ticket was formally presented to the union, as was also Foley's.

Even before this the dozen were busy with a canvass of the union. The members agreed heartily to the plan of demanding an increase in wages, for they had long been dissatisfied with the present scale. But to come out against Foley, that was another matter. Tom found, as he had expected, that his arguments had to be directed, not at convincing the men that Foley was bad, but at convincing them it was safe to oppose him. Reformers are accustomed to explain their failure by saying they cannot arouse the respectable element to come out and vote against corruption. They would find that even fewer would come to the polls if the voters thereby endangered their jobs.

The answers of the men in almost all cases were the same.

"If I was sure I wouldn't lose my job, I'd vote against Foley in a minute. But you know well enough, Tom, that we have a hard enough time getting on now. Where'd we be if Foley blacklisted us?"

"But there's no danger at all, if enough of us come out," Tom would reply. "We can't lose."

"But you can't count on the boys coming out. And if we lose, Foley'll make us all smart. He'll manage to find out every man that voted against him."

Here was the place in which the guarantee he had sought from Mr. Baxter would fit in. Impelled by knowledge of the great value of this guarantee, Tom went to see the big contractor a few days after his first visit. The uniform traveled down the alley between the offices and brought back word that Mr. Baxter was not in. Tom called again and again. Mr. Baxter was always out. Tom was sorely disappointed by his failure to get the guarantee, but there was nothing to do but to make the best of it; and so he and his friends went on tirelessly with their nightly canvassing.

The days, of course, Tom continued to spend in looking for work. In wandering from contractor to contractor he frequently passed the building in which was located the office of Driscoll & Co.; and, a week after his discharge, as he was going by near one o'clock, it chanced Miss Arnold was coming into the street. They saw each other in the same instant. Tom, with his natural diffidence at meeting strange women, was for passing her by with a lift of his hat. "Why, Mr. Keating!" she cried, with a little smile, and as they held the same direction he could but fall into step with her.

"What's the latest war news?" she asked.

"One man still out of a job," he answered, taking refuge in an attempt at lightness. "No actual conflict yet. I'm busy massing my forces. So far I have one man together – myself."

"You ought to find that a loyal army." She was silent for a dozen paces, then asked impulsively: "Have you had lunch yet?"

Tom threw a surprised look down upon her. "Yes. Twelve

o'clock's our noon hour. We men are used to having our lunch then."

"I thought if you hadn't we might have lunched in the same place," she hastened to explain, with a slight flush of embarrassment. "I wanted to ask you some questions. You see, since I've been in New York I've been in a way thrown in contact with labor unions. I've read a great deal on both sides. But the only persons I've had a chance to talk to have all been on the employers' side, – persons like Mr. Driscoll and my uncle, Mr. Baxter."

"Baxter, the contractor – Baxter & Co.?"

"Yes."

Tom wondered what necessity had forced the niece of so rich a man as Mr. Baxter to earn her living as a stenographer.

"I've often wanted to talk with some trade union man, but I've never had the chance. I thought you might tell me some of the things I want to know."

The note of sincere disappointment in Miss Arnold's voice brought a suggestion to Tom's mind that both embarrassed and attracted. He was not accustomed to the society of women of Miss Arnold's sort, whose order of life had been altogether different from his own, and the idea of an hour alone with her filled him with a certain confusion. But her freshness and her desire to know more of the subject that was his whole life allured him; and his interest was stronger than his embarrassment. "For that matter, I'm not busy, as you know. If you would like it, I can

talk to you while you eat."

For the next hour they sat face to face in the quiet little restaurant to which Miss Arnold had led the way. The other patrons found themselves looking over at the table in the corner, and wondering what common subject could so engross the refined young woman in the tailored gown and the man in ill-fitting clothes, with big red hands, red neck and crude, square face. For their part these two were unconscious of the wondering eyes upon them. With a query now and then from Miss Arnold, Tom spiritedly presented the union side of mooted questions of the day, – the open shop, the strike, the sympathetic strike, the boycott. The things Miss Arnold had read had dealt coldly with the moral and economic principles involved in these questions. Tom spoke in human terms; he showed how every point affected living men, and women, and children. The difference was the difference between a treatise and life.

Miss Arnold was impressed, – not alone by what Tom said, but by the man himself. The first two or three times she had seen him, on his brief visits to the office, she had been struck only by a vague bigness – a bigness that was not so much of figure as of bearing. On his last visit she had been struck by his bold spirit. She now discovered the crude, rugged strength of the man: he had thought much; he felt deeply; he believed in the justice of his cause; he was willing, if the need might be, to suffer for his beliefs. And he spoke well, for his sentences, though not always grammatical, were always vital. He seemed to present the very

heart of a thing, and let it throb before the eyes.

When they were in the street again and about to go their separate ways, Miss Arnold asked, with impulsive interest: "Won't you talk to me again about these things – some time?"

Tom, glowing with the excitement of his own words and of her sympathetic listening, promised. It was finally settled that he should call the following Sunday afternoon.

Back at her desk, Miss Arnold fell to wondering what sort of man Tom would be had he had four years at a university, and had his life been thrown among people of cultivation. His power, plus these advantages, would have made him – something big, to say the least. But had he gone to college he would not now be in a trade union. And in a trade union, Miss Arnold admitted to herself, was where he was needed, and where he belonged.

Tom went on his way in the elation that comes of a new and gratifying experience. He had never before had so keen and sympathetic a listener. And never before had he had speech with a woman of Miss Arnold's type – educated, thoughtful, of broad interests. Most of the women he had known necessity had made into household drudges – tired and uninteresting, whose few thoughts rarely ranged far from home. Miss Arnold was a discovery to him. Deep down in his consciousness was a distinct surprise that a woman should be interested in the big things of the outside world.

He was fairly jerked out of his elation, when, on turning a corner, he met Foley face to face in front of a skyscraper that was

going up in lower Broadway. It was their first meeting since Foley had tried to have grim sport out of him on the St. Etienne Hotel.

Foley planted himself squarely across Tom's path. "Hello, Keating! How're youse? Where youse workin' now?"

The sneering good-fellowship in Foley's voice set Tom's blood a-tingling. But he tried to step to one side and pass on. Again Foley blocked his way.

"I understand youse're goin' to be the next walkin' delegate o' the union. That's nice. I s'pose these days youse're trainin' your legs for the job?"

"See here, Buck Foley, are you looking for a fight? If you are, come around to some quiet place and I'll mix it up with you all you want."

"I don't fight a man till he gets in my class."

"If you don't want to fight, then get out of my way!"

With that Tom stepped forward quickly and butted his hunched-out right shoulder against Foley's left. Foley, unprepared, swung round as though on a pivot. Tom brushed by and continued on his way with unturned head.

Again the walking delegate proved that he could swear.

Chapter VIII
THE COWARD

Two days before his meeting with Miss Arnold Tom had been convinced that any more time was wasted that was spent in looking for a job as foreman. He had before him the choice of being idle or working in the gang. He disliked to do the latter, regarding it as a professional relapse. But he was unwilling to draw upon his savings, if that could be avoided, so he decided to go back into the ranks. The previous evening he had heard of three new jobs that were being started. The contractors on two of them he had seen during the morning; and after his encounter with Foley he set out to interview the third. The contractor was an employer of the smallest consequence – a florid man with little cunning eyes. "Yes, I do need some men," he replied to Tom's inquiry. "How much d'you want?"

"Three seventy-five a day, the regular rate."

The contractor shook his head. "Too much. I can only pay three."

"But you signed an agreement to pay the full rate!" Tom cried.

"Oh, a man signs a lot o' things."

Tom was about to turn away, when his curiosity got the better of his disgust. For a union man to work under the scale was an offense against the union. For an employer to pay under the scale

was an offense against the employers' association. Tom decided to draw the contractor out. "Well, suppose I go to work at three dollars, how do we keep from being discovered?" he asked.

The little eyes gleamed with appreciation of their small cunning. "I make this agreement with all my men: You get the full amount in your envelope Saturday. Anybody that sees you open your envelope sees that you're gettin' full scale. Then you hand me back four-fifty later. That's for money I advanced you durin' the week. D'you understand?"

"I do," said Tom. "But I'm no three dollar man!"

"Hold on!" the contractor cried to Tom's back. His cunning told him in an instant that he had made a mistake; that this man, if let go, might make trouble. "I was just foolin' you. Of course, I'll pay you full rate."

Tom knew the man was lying, but he had no real proof that the contractor was breaking faith both with the union and his fellow employers; so, as he needed the money, he took the offered position and went to work the next morning. The job was a fire-engine house just being started on the upper west side of the island. The isolation of the job and the insignificance of the contractor made Tom feel there was a chance Foley might overlook him for the next two weeks.

On the following Saturday morning three new men began work on the job. One of them Tom was certain he knew – a tall, lank fellow, chiefly knobs and angles, with wide, drooping shoulders and a big yellow mustache. Tom left his place at the

crane of the jimmy derrick and ran down a plank into the basement to where this man and four others were rolling a round column to its place.

He touched the man on the shoulder. "Your name's Petersen, ain't it?"

"Yah," said the big fellow.

"And you worked for a couple of days on the St. Etienne Hotel?"

"Yah."

Tom did his duty as prescribed by the union rules. He pointed out Petersen as a scab to the steward. Straightway the men crowded up and there was a rapid exchange of opinions. Tom and the steward wanted that a demand for Petersen's discharge be made of the contractor. But the others favored summary action, and made for where the big Swede was standing.

"Get out!" they ordered.

Petersen glowered at the crowd. "I lick de whole bunch!" he said with slow defiance.

The men were brought to a pause by his threatening attitude. His resentful eyes turned for an instant on Tom. The men began to move forward cautiously. Then the transformation that had taken place on the St. Etienne Hotel took place again. The courage faded from him, and he turned and started up the inclined plank for the street.

Jeers broke from the men. Caps and greasy gloves pelted Petersen's retreating figure. One man, the smallest of the gang,

ran up the plank after him.

"Do him up, Kid!" the men shouted scrambling up to the sidewalk.

Kid, with showy valiance, aimed an upward blow at the Swede's head. Petersen warded off the fist with automatic ease, but made no attempt to strike back. He started away, walking sidewise, one eye on his path, one on his little assailant who kept delivering fierce blows that somehow failed to reach their mark.

"If he ain't runnin' from Kid!" ejaculated the men. "Good boy, Kid!"

The blows became faster and fiercer. At the corner Petersen turned back, held his foe at bay an instant, and a second time Tom felt the resentment of his eyes. Then he was driven around the corner. A minute later the little man came back, puffed out and swaggering.

"What an infernal coward!" the men marveled, as they went back to work.

That was a hard evening for Tom. He not only had to work for votes, but he met two or three lieutenants who were disheartened by the men's slowness to promise support, and to these friends he had to give new courage. Twice, as he was talking to men on the street, he glimpsed the tall, lean figure of Petersen, standing in a doorway as though waiting for someone.

The end of his exhausting evening's work found him near the Barrys', and he dropped in for an exchange of experiences. Barry and Pig Iron Pete had themselves come in but a few minutes

before.

"Got work on your job for a couple more men?" asked Pete after the first words had been spoken.

"Hello! You haven't been fired?"

"That's it," answered Pete; and Barry nodded.

"Foley's work, I suppose?"

"Sure. Foley put Jake Henderson up to it. Oh, Jake makes a hot foreman! Driscoll ought to pay him ten a day to keep off the job. Jake complained against us an' got us fired. Said we didn't know our business."

"Well, it's only for another week, boys," Tom cheered them.

"If you think that then you've had better luck with the men than me 'n' Barry has," Pete declared in disgust. "They're a bunch o' old maids! Foley's too good for 'em. I don't see why we should try to force 'em to take somethin' better." The whole blankety-blanked outfit had Pete's permission to go where they didn't need a forge to heat their rivets.

"You don't understand 'em, Pete," returned Tom. "They've got to think first of all of how to earn a living for their families. Of course they're going to hesitate to do anything that will endanger their chance to earn a living. And you seem to forget that we've only got to get one man in five to win out."

"An' we've got to get him!" said Barry, almost fiercely.

"D'you think there's much danger of your losin', Tom?" Mrs. Barry queried anxiously.

"Not if we work. But we've got to work."

Mrs. Barry was silent for several moments, during which the talk of the men ran on. Suddenly, she broke in: "Don't you think the women'd have some influence with their husbands?"

Tom was silent for a thoughtful minute. "Some of them, mebbe."

"More'n you think, I bet!" Mrs. Barry declared. "It's worth tryin', anyhow. Here's what I'm goin' to do: I'm goin' to start out to-morrow an' begin visitin' all the union women I know. I can get the addresses of others from them. An' I'll keep at it every afternoon I can get away till the election. I'll talk to 'em good an' straight an' get 'em to talk to other women. An' we'll get a lot o' the men in line, see if we don't!"

Tom looked admiringly at Mrs. Barry's homely face, flushed with determination. "The surest thing we can do to win is to put you up for walking delegate. I'll hustle for you."

"Oh, g'wan with you, Tom!" She smiled with pleasure, however. "I've got a picture o' myself climbin' up ladders an' buyin' drinks for the men."

"If you was the walkin' delegate," said Pete, "we'd always work on the first floor, an' never drink nothin' but tea."

"You shut up, Pete!" Mrs. Barry looked at Tom. "I suppose you're wife'll help in this, too?"

Tom looked steadily at the scroll in Mrs. Barry's red rug. "I'm afraid not," he said at length. "She – she couldn't stand climbing the stairs."

It was after eleven o'clock when Tom left the Barrys' and

started through the quiet cross street toward a car line. A man stepped from an adjoining doorway, and fell in a score of paces behind him. Tom heard rapid steps drawing nearer and nearer, but it was not till the man had gained to within a pace that it occurred to him perhaps he was being followed. Then it was too late. His arm was seized in a grip of steel.

The street was dark and empty. Thoughts of Foley's entertainment committee flashed through his head. He whirled about and struck out fiercely with his free arm. His wrist was caught and held by a grip like the first. He was as helpless as if handcuffed.

"I vant a yob," a savage voice demanded.

Tom recognized the tall, angular figure. "Hello, Petersen! What d'you want?"

"I vant a yob."

"A job. How can I give you a job?"

"You take to-day ma yob avay. You give me a yob!"

In a flash Tom understood. The Swede held him accountable for the incident of the morning, and was determined to force another job from him. Was the man crazy? At any rate 'twould be wiser to parley than to bring on a conflict with one possessed of such strength as those hands betokened. So he made no attempt to break loose.

"I can't give you a job, I say."

"You take it avay!" the Swede said, with fierce persistence. "You make me leave!"

"It's your own fault. If you want to work, why don't you get into the union?"

Tom felt a convulsive shiver run through the man's big frame. "De union? Ah, de union! Ev'ryvare I ask for yob. Ev'ryvare! 'You b'long to union?' de boss say. 'No,' I say. De boss give me no yob. De union let me not vork! De union – !" His hands gripped tighter in his impotent bitterness.

"Of course the union won't let you work."

"Vy? I am strong! – yes. I know de vork."

Tom felt that no explanation of unionism, however lucid, would quiet this simple-minded excitement. So he said nothing.

"Vy should I not vork? Dare be yobs. I know how to vork. But no! De union! I mak dis mont' two days. I mak seven dollar. Seven dollar!" He fairly shook Tom, and a half sob broke from his lips. "How de union tank I live? My family? – me? Seven dollar?"

Tom recognized with a thrill that which he was hearing. It was the man's soul crying out in resentment and despair.

"But you can't blame the union," he said weakly, feeling that his answer did not answer.

"You tank not?" Petersen cried fiercely. "You tank not?" He was silent a brief space, and his breath surged in and out as though he had just paused from running. Suddenly he freed Tom's wrists and set his right hand into Tom's left arm. "Come! I show you vot de union done."

He started away. Those iron fingers locked about the

prisoner's arm were a needless fetter. The Swede's despairing soul, glimpsed for a moment, had thrown a spell upon Tom, and he would have followed willingly.

Their long strides matched, and their heel-clicks coincided. Both were silent. At the end of ten minutes they were in a narrow street, clifted on its either side with tenements that reached up darkly. Presently the Swede turned down a stairway, sentineled by garbage cans. Tom thought they were entering a basement. But Petersen walked on, and in the solid blackness Tom was glad of the hand locked on his arm. They mounted a flight of stone steps, and came into a little stone-paved court. Far above there was a roof-framed square of stars. Petersen led the way across the court and into the doorway of a rear tenement. The air was rotting. They went up two flights of stairs, so old that the wood shivered under foot. Petersen opened a door. A coal oil lamp burned on an otherwise barren table, and beside the table sat a slight woman with a quilt drawn closely about her.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.