CY WARMAN

SNOW ON THE HEADLIGHT

Cy Warman

Snow on the Headlight

Warman C.

Snow on the Headlight / C. Warman — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

PREFACE 5
CHAPTER FIRST 6
CHAPTER SECOND 9
CHAPTER THIRD 12
CHAPTER FOURTH 15
CHAPTER FIFTH 17
CHAPTER SIXTH 20
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента. 22

Cy Warman
Snow on the Headlight / A Story of the Great Burlington Strike

PREFACE

Here is a Decoy Duck stuffed with Oysters

The Duck is mere Fiction:

The Oysters are Facts

If you find the Duck wholesome, and the Oysters hurt you, it is probably because you had a hand in the making of this bit of History, and in the creation of these Facts

THE AUTHOR

CHAPTER FIRST

Good managers are made from messenger boys, brakemen, wipers and telegraphers; just as brave admirals are produced in due time by planting a cadet in a naval school. From two branches of the service come the best equipped men in the railroad world—from the motive-power department and from the train service. This one came from the mechanical department, and he spent his official life trying to conceal the fact—striving to be just to all his employees and to show no partiality towards the department from whence he sprang—but always failing.

"These men will not strike," he contended: "The brains of the train are in the engine."

"O, I don't think," Mr. Josler, the general superintendent, would say; and if you followed his accent it would take you right back to the heart of Germany: "Giff me a goot conductor, an' I git over the roat."

No need to ask where he came from.

As the grievance grew in the hands of the "grief" committee, and the belief became fixed in the minds of the officials that the employees were looking for trouble, the situation waxed critical. "Might as well make a clean job of it," the men would say; and then every man who had a grievance, a wound where there had been a grievance or a fear that he might have something to complain of in the future, contributed to the real original grievance until the trouble grew so that it appalled the officials and caused them to stiffen their necks. In this way the men and the management were being wedged farther and farther apart. Finally, the general manager, foreseeing what war would cost the company and the employees, made an effort to reach a settlement, but the very effort was taken as evidence of weakness, and instead of yielding something the men took courage, and lengthened the list of grievances. His predecessor had said to the president of the company when the last settlement was effected: "This is our last compromise. The next time we shall have to fight—my back is to the wall." But, when the time came for the struggle, he had not the heart to make the fight, and so resigned and went west, where he died shortly afterwards, and dying, escaped the sorrow that must have been his had he lived to see how his old, much-loved employees were made to suffer.

Now the grievance committee came with an ultimatum to the management. "Yes, or No?" demanded the chairman with a Napoleonic pose. But the general superintendent was loth to answer.

"Yes, or No?"

Mr. Josler hesitated, equivocated, and asked to be allowed to confer with his chief.

"Yes, or No?" demanded the fearless leader, lifting his hand like an auctioneer.

"Vell, eef you put it so, I must say No," said the superintendent and instantly the leader turned on his heel. He did not take the trouble to say good-day, but snapped his finger and strode away.

Now the other members of the committee got up and went out, pausing to say good morning to the superintendent who stood up to watch the procession pass out into the wide hall. One man, who confirmed the general manager's belief that there were brains among the engine-men, lingered to express his regrets that the conference should have ended so abruptly.

The news of this man's audacity spread among the higher officials, so that when the heads of the brotherhoods came—which is a last resort—the company were almost as haughty and remote as the head of the grievance committee had been.

From that moment the men and the management lost faith in each other. More, they refused even to understand each other. Whichever side made a slight concession it was made to suffer for it, for such an act was sure to be interpreted by the other side as a sign of weakening. In vain did the heads of the two organizations, representing the engine-men, strive to overcome the mischief done by the local committee, and to reach a settlement. They showed, by comparison, that this, the smartest road in the West, was paying a lower rate of wages to its engine-men than was paid by a majority of the railroads of the country. They urged the injustice of the classification of engineers, but the

management claimed that the system was just, and later received the indorsement, on this point, of eight-tenths of the daily press. Eight out of ten of these editors knew nothing of the real merits or demerits of the system, but they thought they knew, and so they wrote about it, the people read about it and gave or withheld their sympathy as the news affected them.

When the heads of the brotherhoods announced their inability to reach an agreement they were allowed to return to their respective homes, beyond the borders of the big state, and out of reach of the Illinois conspiracy law. A local man "with sand to fight" was chosen commander-in-chief, and after one more formal effort to reach a settlement he called the men out.

On a blowy Sunday afternoon in February the chief clerk received a wire calling him to the office of the general manager. He found his chief pacing the floor. As the secretary entered, the general manager turned, faced him, and then, waving a hand over the big flat-topped desk that stood in the centre of his private office, said: "Take this all away, John. The engineers are going to strike and I want nothing to come to my desk that does not relate to that, until this fight is over."

Noting the troubled, surprised look upon the secretary's face the manager called him.

"Come here John. Are you afraid? Does the magnitude of it all appal you—do you want to quit? If you do say so now."

As he spoke the piercing, searching eyes of the general manager swept the very soul of his secretary. The two men looked at each other. Instantly the shadow passed from the long, sad face of the clerk, and in its place sat an expression of calm determination. Now the manager spoke not a word, but reaching for the hand of his faithful assistant, pressed it firmly, and turned away.

There was no spoken pledge, no vow, no promise of loyalty, but in that mute handclasp there was an oath of allegiance.

At four o'clock on the following morning—Monday, February the 27th, 1888,—every locomotive engineer and fireman in the service of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad Company quit work. The fact that not one man remained in the service an hour after the order went out, shows how firmly fixed was the faith of the men in the ability of the "Twin Brotherhoods" to beat the company, and how universal was the belief that their cause was just. All trains in motion at the moment when the strike was to take effect were run to their destination, or to divisional stations, rather, and there abandoned by the crew.

The conductors, brakemen and baggagemen were not in the fight, and when directed by the officials to take the engines and try to run them or fire them, they found it hard to refuse to obey the order. Some of them had no thought of refusing, but cheerfully took the engines out, and—drowned them. That was a wild, exciting day for the officials, but it was soon forgotten in days that made that one seem like a pleasant dream.

The long struggle that had been going on openly between the officials and the employees was now enacted privately, silently, deep in the souls of men. Each individual must face the situation and decide for himself upon which side he would enlist. Hundreds of men who had good positions and had, personally, no grievance, felt in honor bound to stand by their brothers, and these men were the heroes of the strike, for it is infinitely finer to fight for others than for one's self. When a man has toiled for a quarter of a century to gain a comfortable place it is not without a struggle that he throws it all over, in an unselfish effort to help a brother on. The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers had grown to be respected by the public because of almost countless deeds of individual heroism. It was deferred to—and often encouraged by railway officials, because it had improved the service a thousand per cent. The man who climbed down from the cab that morning on the "Q" was as far ahead of the man who held the seat twenty years earlier, as an English captain is ahead of the naked savage whose bare feet beat the sands of the Soudan. By keeping clear of entangling alliances and carefully avoiding serious trouble, the Brotherhood had, in the past ten years, piled up hundreds of thousands of dollars. This big roll of the root of all evil served now to increase the confidence of the leaders, and to encourage the men to strike.

At each annual convention mayors, governors and prominent public men paraded the virtues of the Brotherhood until its members came to regard themselves as just a little bit bigger, braver and better than ordinary mortals. Public speakers and writers were for ever predicting that in a little while the Brotherhood would be invincible.[1] And so, hearing only good report of itself the Brotherhood grew over-confident, and entered this great fight top-heavy because of an exaggerated idea of its own greatness.

The Engineers' Brotherhood was not loved by other organizations. The conductors disliked it, and it had made itself offensive to the firemen because of its persistent refusal to federate or affiliate in any manner with other organizations having similar aims and objects. But now, finding itself in the midst of a hard fight, it evinced a desire to combine. The brakemen refused to join the engine-men, though sympathizing with them, but the switchmen were easily persuaded. The switchman of a decade ago could always be counted upon to fight. In behind his comb, tooth-brush and rabbit's foot, he carried a neatly folded, closely written list of grievances upon which he was ready to do battle. Peace troubled his mind.

Some one signed a solemn compact in which the engineers bound themselves to support the switchmen—paying them as often as the engine-men drew money—and the switchmen went out. They struck vigorously, and to a man, and remained loyal long after the Brotherhood had broken its pledge and cut off the pay of the strikers.[2] In this battle the switchmen were the bravest of the brave.

At the end of the first month of the strike the lines were pretty well drawn. There was no neutral ground for employees. A man was either with the company or with the strikers.

---

[1] "*I dare say that the engineers' strike will end, as all strikes have hitherto ended, in disaster to the strikers. But I am sure that strikes will not always end so. It is only a question of time, and of a very little time, till the union of labor shall be so perfect that nothing can defeat it. We may say this will be a very good time or a very bad time; all the same it is coming.*"—*W. D. Howells, in Harper's Weekly, April 21, 1888.*

[2] *At the annual convention held at Atlanta, in the autumn of that year (1888) the engineers dropped the sympathy-striking switchmen from the pay roll, at the same time increasing the pay of striking engineers from $40.00 to $50.00 a month.*

CHAPTER SECOND

"Good morning, John," said the general manager coming softly through the little gate that fenced off a small reservation in the outer office, and beyond which the secretary and his assistants worked: "How goes the battle?"

"Well, on the whole," said the chief clerk, gathering up a batch of telegrams that made up the official report from the various division superintendents; "it was a rough night. Three yard engines disabled in the Chicago yards, freight train burned at Burlington, head-end collision on the B. & M. Division, two engineers and one fireman killed, ware-house burned at Peoria, two bridges blown up in Iowa, two trains ditched near Denver, three—"

"Well! well!" broke in the general manager, "that will do." The clerk stopped short, the office boy passed out through the open door and a great swell of silence surged into the room.

After taking a few turns up and down the office, the manager stopped at the secretary's desk and added: "We must win this strike. The directors meet to-day and those English share-holders are getting nervous. They can't understand that this fight is necessary—that we are fighting for peace hereafter; weeding out a pestilence that threatens, not only the future of railway corporations, but the sacred rights of American citizens—the right to engage in whatever business or calling one cares to follow, and to employ whom he will at whatever wages the employer and employed may agree upon. Let these strikers win and we shall have a strike as often as the moon changes. When I endeavor to reach an agreement with them, they take it that the company is weakening, and the leaders will listen to nothing. I shudder to think what is in store for them and what they must suffer before they can understand."

With that the general manager passed into the private office and the chief clerk, who had been at his post all night, turned to a steaming breakfast which the porter had just brought from a café across the street. The postman came in, grave-faced and silent, and left a big bundle of letters on the secretary's desk. Most of the mail was official, but now and then there came letters from personal friends who held similar positions on other roads, assuring the general manager of their sympathy, and that they would aid his company whenever they could do so secretly and without exciting their own employees.

Many letters came from stockholders protesting vigorously against a continuation of the strike. Some anonymous letters warned the company that great calamity awaited the management, unless the demands of the employees were acceded to and the strike ended. A glance into the newspapers that came in, showed that three-fourths of the press of the country praised the management and referred to the strikers as dynamiters and anarchists. The other fourth rejoiced at each drop in the stocks and called every man a martyr who was arrested at the instigation of the railroad company. The reports sent out daily by the company and those collected at the headquarters of the strikers agreed exactly as to date, but disagreed in all that followed.

The secretary, somewhat refreshed by a good breakfast, waded through the mail, making marks and notations occasionally with a blue pencil on the turned down corners of letters.

Some of the communications were referred to the general traffic manager, some to the general passenger agent, others to the superintendent of motive power and machinery. They were all sorted carefully and deposited in wicker baskets, bearing the initials of the different departments. Many were dropped into the basket marked "G. M." but most of the matter was disposed of by the secretary himself, for the chief clerk of a great railway system, having the signature of the General Manager, is one of the busiest, and usually one of the brightest men in the company's employ.

The general manager in his private office pored over the morning papers, puffing vigorously now and then as he perused a paragraph that praised the strikers, but, when the literature was to his liking, smoked slowly and contentedly, like a man without a care.

Such were the scenes and conditions in and about the general offices of the Chicago Burlington & Quincy Railroad Company when a light foot-step was heard in the hall and a gentle voice came singing:

"Always together in sunshine and rain.
Facing the weather—"

"Good morning, Patsy," said the chief clerk, looking up as Patsy paused at the gate, removed his hat and bowed two or three short quick bows with his head without bowing his body.

"I beg your pardon," said Patsy, "I thought you were alone."

"Well, I am alone."

"No you're not—I'm here. Always together—"

"Come! Come! Patsy don't get funny this morning."

"Get funny! how can I get funny when I'm already funny? I was born funny—they had fun with me at the christening, and I expect they'll have the divil's own time with me at the wake. Always—"

"Sh! Sh!—Be quiet," said the secretary, nodding his head and his thumb in the direction of the door of the private office.

"Is the governor in?" asked Patsy.

"Yes."

"Now that's lucky for me, for I wanted to ask a favor and I want it to-day, and if the governor was not in you would say, 'I'll have to see the governor;' then when I came back you would say 'The governor has left the office, and I forgot it,' but now that the governor is here you can do it yourself. I want to go to Council Bluffs."

"All right, Patsy, you can go if you can persuade those friends of yours to allow us to run a train."

"On the Q?"

"That's the only line we control."

"Not on your salary."

"Then you can't go," said the clerk, as he resumed the work before him.

"What's the matter with the North Western?" asked Patsy in an earnest, pleading tone.

"You ought to know that we can't give passes over a competing line."

"I do know it, but you can give me a letter over there. Just say: 'Please give Patsy Daly transportation, Chicago to Council Bluffs and return;' that'll do the business. You might add a paragraph about me being an old and trusted employee and—"

"A bold and mistrusted striker, Patsy, would be nearer the card."

"Now don't bring up unpleasant recollections," said Patsy with a frown that didn't make him look as cross as some men look when they laugh: "It will be a neat way of showing that the Q is big enough to be good to her old employees, even if her stock is a little down. What do you say—do I get the pass—does mother see her railroad boy to-night?"

The door that was marked "Private" opened slowly and the general manager came in. The chief clerk shuffled the letters while Patsy made a desperate effort to look serious and respectful.

"What brings you here, Patsy?" asked the head of the road, for he was by no means displeased at seeing one of the old employees in the office who was not a member of a grievance committee.

"I want to get a pass, if you please sir, to run down to the Bluffs and see the folks."

"Patsy wants a request for a pass over the North Western," said the clerk, taking courage now that the subject was opened.

"Ah! is that all? now suppose I ask you to take a passenger train out to-night, will you do it?" asked the general manager, turning to Patsy.

"What's the matter with the regular conductor?"

"Joined the strikers," was the reply.

"But the papers say the strike is over."

"It is! but a lot of you fellows don't seem to know it."

"I'm glad of it, and now I must hurry back, so as to be ready to take my run out. Do I get the pass?"

"And you expect, when the strike is off, to go back to your old place?"

"Sure," said Patsy, "I don't intend to quit you as long as you have a brake for me to turn."

"There's a lot of brakes that nobody is turning right now; come, you young rascal, will you go to work?"

"Now," said the young rascal, "you know what it says at the bottom of the time-card: 'In case of doubt take the safe side.' I'm waiting to see which side is safe."

With that the manager went back to his desk and closed the door behind him, and the secretary went on with his work.

Patsy stood and looked out at the window for a while, and then said half to himself, but so the clerk could hear him: "Poor little mother, how she will miss me to-night."

The secretary said nothing, but leaving his desk entered the office of his chief, and when they had talked over the business of the hour and read the story prepared by the passenger department for the press that day, he asked what should be done for Patsy.

"Oh! give him the letter, I suppose, but he's the only employee on the road I would do so much for."

"And he's the only one with nerve enough to ask it," said the secretary.

"Yes, he is a bit nervy, John; but it isn't an offensive sort of nerve; and then he's so happy. Why, he really rests me when he comes in. He's smart, too, too smart to be a striker and he may be of some use to us yet."

In a little while Patsy went singing himself out just as he had sung himself in. The general manager sat watching the happy youth from the outer door of his room until the song and the sound of footsteps died away in the wide hall. Turning to his desk he sighed and said: "Ah, well! the English poet was right when he wrote:

'The world that knows itself too sad
Is proud to keep some faces glad!'"

CHAPTER THIRD

Patsy, the postman and the newsgatherers, who left the headquarters of the company and wandered over to the Grand Pacific where the strikers held forth, must have been struck forcibly by the vast difference in the appearance of the two places upon this particular morning. At the first place all was neatness and order in spite of the deplorable condition of affairs outside; and a single man handled the almost endless flood of letters and telegrams that fell like autumn leaves upon his desk.

In fact, the office boy and the colored porter were the only people about the company's headquarters who showed any real anxiety.

At the headquarters of the strikers all was confusion and disorder. The outer offices and anterooms were filled with a vast crowd of men who idled about, smoked, swapped stories and swore; and some of them, I'm sorry to say, chewed tobacco and flooded the floor with inexcusable filth. Even Mr. Hogan's private office was not private. Leading strikers and men prominent in the Brotherhood loafed there as the others loafed outside. Not more than half the men about the building had ever been employed by the Burlington company. There were scores of "tramp" switchmen and travelling trainmen, made reckless by idleness, as men are sometimes made desperate by hunger, with an alarmingly large representation of real criminals, who follow strikes as "grafters" follow a circus. If a striker lost his temper and talked as he ought not to talk, this latter specimen was always ready to encourage him; for whatever promised trouble for others promised profitable pastime for the criminal. If the real workers could keep clear of this class, as well as the idle, loafing element in their own profession, ninety per cent. of the alleged labor outrages would never be committed. Very likely there were a number of detectives moving among the strikers, and they, too, have been known to counsel violence in order to perpetuate a struggle between labor and capital that they themselves might not be idle. It is only in the best organized agencies that detectives can be relied upon to take no undue advantage of those whom they are sent out to detect. Over in another part of the same building, where the firemen held forth, the scene was about the same, save that the men there were younger in years and louder in their abuse of the railway officials; and generally less discreet.

"Always together in sunshine and rain,
Facing the weather atop o' the train,"

sang Patsy as he strolled into the private office of Chairman Borphy, who was in charge of the firemen's end of the strike. Borphy greeted Patsy pleasantly as did the others in the office, with one exception. Over in a window sat fireman George Cowels, a great striker, and in the eyes of some of his enthusiastic friends a great man, and in his own estimation a great orator. Removing his cigar in order to give the proper effect to the expression he was about to assume, Cowels gave Patsy a hard searching look as he asked:

"Does that song of yours mean yourself and the general manager?"

"An' if it does," said Patsy, stepping close in front of his questioner: "What's it *to* you?"

"Just this," said Cowels: "You have been watched. You went to the general office this morning the moment it was open, and took a message for Mr. Stonaker to the general manager of the C. & N. W. Does that fit your case? Perhaps you will favor us with the result of your mission! Come, will the North Western help your friend out?"

At the conclusion of this eloquent burst of indignation Cowels smiled triumphantly, for, as Patsy paled into silence, the big fellow thought he had his man scared; but when Patsy took another step forward, forcing his opponent back to the window, and asked between his closed teeth, if Cowels meant to accuse him of betraying the strikers to the company every one in the room realized that something was about to happen. Perhaps Cowels thought so, too, but he was in a hole and could only

answer Yes. The next instant Patsy drove his fist up under the orator's chin, and the back of that gentleman's head made a hole in the window. The bystanders, knowing the temper of both the men, sprang between them before any further damage could be done.

If Patsy had the best of the fight he had the worst of the argument. He had been openly accused of being a "spotter" and had made no explanation of his conduct; so when it was reported that he had gone to Council Bluffs over the North Western, the more ignorant and noisy of his associates were easily persuaded that such a favor to a striker could only be secured upon the request of Mr. Stonaker and that request would be given only for services rendered; and Patsy Daly was from that day doomed to walk under a cloud.

The long struggle was beginning to tell on the strikers. It was evidenced in the shiny suits worn by the men who met daily at the hall in town to discuss the strike. It was seen again in the worn wraps of many a mother and in the torn shoes of school-children. These were only the outer signs, the real suffering was carefully covered up—hidden in the homes where home comfort had become a reminiscence. The battle at first had been with the strong but now the brunt of it was being shifted to the shoulders of the women, the wives and mothers of the strikers. These patient martyrs, whose business it had been to look after the home, now suffered the humiliation of having door after door closed to them and their children. Of a morning you might see them tramping through the snow from shop to shop trying to secure credit for the day. The strike would be over in a little while, they argued, but the struggling shop-keeper had his own to look after. The wholesale houses were refusing him credit and so he was powerless to help the hungry wives of worthy workmen. The men themselves were beginning to lose heart. Many a man who had not known what it was to be without a dollar now saw those dearest to him in actual want and went away to look for work on other roads. Finally, a monster union meeting was called for the purpose of getting an expression of opinion as to the advisability of making the best possible terms with the company and calling the strike off. Here the engine-men, trainmen and switchmen met, but the radical element was in the majority, and the suggestions of the heads of the various Brotherhoods that the strike be called off were howled down by the unterrified. It was at this meeting that a tall, powerful, but mild mannered man, stood up in the face of all the opposing elements and advised that the strike be ended at once. He did not suggest this from a selfish motive, he said. He was a single man and had money enough to keep himself in idleness for a year, but there were hundreds of families who were in want, and it was for these he was pleading. The speaker was interrupted repeatedly, but he kept his place and continued to talk until the mob became silent and listened out of mere curiosity. "You can never hold an army of hungry men together," said the speaker; "you can't fight gold with a famine. The company, we are told, has already lost a million dollars. What of it? You forget that it has been making millions annually for the past ten years. What have we been making? Lots of money, I'll admit, but none of it has been saved. The company is rich, the brotherhoods are bankrupt. From the remotest corners of the country comes the cry of men weary of paying assessments to support us in idleness. To-day some sort of settlement might be made—to-morrow it may be too late."

At this juncture the mob howled the speaker down again. Men climbed over benches to get at the "traitor." A man who had been persuaded to leave the company, and who had been taken into the order only the day before, tried to strike the engineer in the face. In the midst of the excitement, George Cowels of the Fireman's Brotherhood leaped upon the platform and at sight of him and the sound of his powerful voice the rioters became quiet.

"I think," he began slowly to show how easy it was for a truly great leader to keep cool in the hottest of the fight, "I think I can explain the action of the last speaker."

Here he paused and looked down into the frank face of Dan Moran and continued:

"Mr. Moran, as many of you know, has one of the best runs on the road. He has had it for a good many years and he loathes to leave it. By denying himself the luxury of a cigar and never taking a drink he has managed to save up some money. He is a money-getter—a money-saver and it hurts

him to be idle. I have been firing for him for five years and in all that time he has never been the man to say: 'Come, George, let's have a drink or a cigar.' Now I propose that we chip in and pay Mr. Dan Moran his little four dollars a day. Let us fight this fight to a finish. Let there be no retreat until the proud banner of our Brotherhood waves above the blackened ruins of the once powerful Burlington route. Down with all traitors: on with the fight."

At the conclusion of this speech the audience went wild. When order had been partially restored a vote was taken, when it was shown that seven-eighths of the men were in favor of continuing the strike.

The engineers had really been spoiled by success. At the last annual convention they had voted to exterminate the classification system, and had passed a law making it impossible for the head of the organization to make any settlement that included a continuation of classification. The scalps of the Atchison, the Alton, the Louisville and Nashville, and a number of other strong companies dangled at the belt of the big chief of the Engineers' Brotherhood. These were all won by diplomacy, but the men did not know it. They believed that the show of strength had awed the railway officials of the country and that the railway labor organizations were invincible. A little easing off by the Brotherhood, and a little forbearance on the part of the management might, at the start, have averted the great struggle; but when once war had been declared the generals on both sides had no choice but to fight it out to a finish.

CHAPTER FOURTH

"Can you spare me a little money, George?" asked Mrs. Cowels, adjusting her last year's coat.

"What do you want of money?"

"Well—it's Christmas eve, and I thought we ought to have something for Bennie. He has been asking me all evening what I expected from Santa Claus, never hinting, of course, that he expected anything."

"Well, here's a dollar."

Mrs. Cowels took the money and went over to the little store.

There were so many things to choose from that she found it difficult to make a selection. Finally she paid a quarter for a tin whistle and two bunches of noise—that was for the boy. With the remaining seventy-five cents she bought a pair of gloves for her husband.

"Anybody been here to-day?" asked Cowels of his wife when she came back from the store.

"Yes, Mr. Squeesum, secretary of the Benevolent Building Association, was here to see you about the last two payments which are over-due, on the house."

"What did you tell him?"

"I told him that we had no money."

"What did he say?"

"He said that was very strange, as the Brotherhoods were pouring thousands of dollars into Chicago to aid the strikers. What becomes of all this money, George? You never seem to get any of it."

"We pour it out again," said Cowels, "to the army of engine-men who are coming here from the Reading and everywhere to take our places. We hire them—buy them off—bribe them, to prevent them from taking service with the company, and yet it seems there is no end to the supply. For every man we secure the company brings a score, and we are losing ground. Members of the Brotherhood everywhere are growing weary of the long struggle. They have good jobs and object to paying from six to twelve dollars a month to support the strikers. Some have even refused to pay assessments and have surrendered their charters. Anybody else here?"

"Yes, a man named Hawkins. He wanted room and board."

"What did you tell him?"

"I told him we had never kept roomers or boarders, but he said he liked the place—for me to speak to you, and he would call again."

"Huh! he must like the place. Well, I guess we can get along some way," said Cowels, and then he sat and looked into the fire for a while without saying anything. When Mrs. Cowels had put the baby down she came and sat near her husband and they began to discuss the future. They had bought their little home a year and a half ago for twelve hundred dollars. They had lived economically and had been able to reduce the debt to six hundred dollars. But when the strike came they were unable to keep up the payments and now the association had begun to push them. If they did not pay within the next thirty days the real estate company with the soft sounding title would foreclose the mortgage. When they had talked this all over, Mrs. Cowels proposed that they take the stranger in, but her husband objected. "I didn't want to tell you, George," said the brave little woman, "but there was another caller. The grocer and butcher was here this morning and we can get no more meat or groceries until we pay. He is a poor man, you know, and he can't keep up the families of all the strikers. I didn't want to worry you with this, George, but since you are opposed to me helping by taking a lodger I will tell you that something must be done."

Cowels lighted a fresh cigar. That was the third one since supper. They cost all the way from two to five cents apiece, but Mrs. Cowels knew that he was worried about lodge matters and if she thought anything about it at all, she probably reasoned that it was a good thing to be able to smoke and forget.

"I made the speech of my life to-day," said the striker, brushing the ashes lightly from his cigar. "The hall was packed and the fellows stood up on their chairs and yelled. One fellow shouted, 'Three cheers for the next Grand Master,' and the gang threw up their hats and hollered till I thought they'd gone wild. Nora, if there was a convention to-morrow I'd win, hands down."

Mrs. Cowels smiled faintly, for to her way of thinking there were other things as important as her husband's election to the position of Grand Master of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen, and she changed the subject. Presently the door-bell sounded, so loud and piercing that the sound of it waked the baby. The man who had pulled the bell knew at once that he had made no mistake. He had noticed when he called that morning that the bell upon the door had once done service in the cab of a locomotive, and had made a note of the fact. While Mrs. Cowels hushed the baby her husband answered the bell and when Mr. Hawkins gave his name and made his wants known, Cowels told him shortly that they did not keep lodgers. He knew that, he said, and that was one of the reasons why he was so anxious to come, but Cowels, who liked to show his authority at all times, shut the door, and the stranger was not taken in.

That night when the orator was dreaming that he had been chosen Grand Master of the Brotherhood, his wife stole out of the room and put the things in Bennie's sock, and then, just to please Bennie, she put a rubber rattle in the baby's little stocking. Her husband, being a great thinker, would not consent to having his hosiery hung up, so she would wait till breakfast time and hide the gloves under his plate. Then she went over to tuck the cover in around Bennie. He was smiling—dreaming, doubtless, of red sleds and firecrackers—and his mother smiled, too, and kissed him and went back to bed.

CHAPTER FIFTH

It was a rough, raw, Chicago day. The snow came in spurts, cold and cutting from the north and the scantily dressed strikers were obliged to dance about and beat their hands to keep warm. Special mounted police were riding up and down the streets that paralleled the Burlington tracks, and ugly looking armed deputies were everywhere in evidence. The forced quiet that pervaded the opposing armies served only to increase the anxiety of the observing. Every man who had any direct interest in the contest seemed to have a chip on his shoulder.

At ten o'clock the strike was to be extended to all connecting lines, the switching yards and stock yards. When the hour arrived the switchmen threw up their caps and quit. Now the different companies made an effort to replace the strikers and trouble commenced. The deputies, who had been aching to get a whack at the strikers for countless cursings which they had received, now used their guns unmercifully upon the unprotected heads of the men, and the police, who disliked and refused to associate with the deputies, used their clubs upon all who resisted them. By eleven o'clock the whole city was in a state of riot and men bruised and bleeding were loaded into wagons and hurried away until the jails were filled with criminals, bums, deputies and strikers. The police courts were constantly grinding out justice, or decisions intended to take the place of justice. Mothers were often seen begging the magistrates to release their boys and wives praying for the pardon of their husbands. These prayers were often unanswered and the poor women were forced to return to a lonely home, to an empty cupboard and a cold hearth.

In the midst of the rioting on this wild day came Patsy Daly strolling up the track singing:

"Always together in sunshine and rain
Facing the weather atop o' th' train.
Watching the meadows move under the stars
Always together atop o' th' cars."

"Hello! there!" came from a box car.

"Hello to you," said Patsy as he turned out to see what the fellow was in for. "Now, what the divil you doin' caged up in this car?"

"I'm hidin' from the strikers," said the man, peeping cautiously out.

"Faith, and I'm one of them myself," says Patsy, "and I suppose you're after takin' my place, ye spalpeen; I have a right to swat your face for you, so I have."

"You couldn't do it if I was opposed," said the stranger opening the door.

"Oh! couldn't I? then let yourself drop to the ground till I take a little of the conceit out of you."

"No, I won't fight you," said the man, "I like your face and I want you to help me out."

"And I like your nerve; now, what's your pleasure? Have you been working in this strike?"

"I started to work this morning only to get something to eat on."

"Are you a railroad man?"

"I'm a switchman. I was foreman in the yards at Buffalo, had a scrap with the yard-master who had boasted that he would not have a switchman he couldn't curse, an' got fired."

"Did you lick him?"

"Yes."

"Good and plenty?"

"Yes."

"Go on with your story."

"Well," said the man, seating himself in the door of the car, "I started out to get work—had my card from the Union and felt sure of success. I had only been married a year, but of course I had to

leave my wife in Buffalo until I got located. When I applied for work I was asked for references and I had none. I told them where I had worked; they asked me to call later, and I called, only to learn that they didn't need any more men. This performance was repeated in every town I struck, until I began to believe that I had been blacklisted. In time my money gave out. I wrote to my wife and she sent me money. When that was gone I sent for more, not stopping to think that she had to eat, too, and that I had given her but ten dollars when I left home; but she sent me money.

"Then there came a time when she could not send me anything; I could not keep up my dues in the Union, so was expelled. After that I found it hard to get passes. Lots of times I had to steal them, and finally—for the first time in my life—I stole something to eat. Say, pardner, did you ever get so hungry that the hunger cramped you like cholera morbus?"

"No."

"Then I reckon you've never stole, or what's worse, scabbed?"

"No."

"Well—I've done both, though this is the first time I've scabbed. As I was sayin' I got down so low that I had to steal, and then I thought of my wife, of how terrible it would be if she should have to steal, or maybe worse, and the thought of it drove me almost crazy. She was a pretty girl when I married her, an orphan only eighteen and I was twenty-eight. I determined to go home at once, but before I could get out of town I was arrested as a vag and sent up for sixty days. I thought at that time that my punishment was great,—that the mental and physical suffering that I endured in the workhouse was all that I could stand,—but I've seen it beaten since. At last they told me that I could go, but that I would be expected to shake the city of Chicago before the sun rose on the following day, and I did. I hung myself up on the trucks of a Pullman on the Lake Shore Limited and landed in Buffalo just before dawn. As I hurried along the old familiar streets I noticed a crowd of people standing by a narrow canal and stopped to see what the excitement was. I saw them fish the limp and lifeless form of a woman out of the muddy water and when the moonlight fell upon her face it startled me, for it was so like her face. A moment later I got near enough to see that the victim was a blonde, and my wife was brunette. Presently I came to the house where we had lived, but it was closed and dark. I aroused a number of the neighbors, but none of them knew where the little woman had gone.

"'Shure,' said an old woman who was peddling milk, 'I don't know phere she's at at all, at all. That big good-fur-nothin' man o' hern has gone along and deserted of her an' broke the darlint's heart, so 'e 'as an' the end uv it all will be that she'll be afther drownin' 'erself in the canal beyant wan uv these foine nights.'

"All through the morning I searched the place for her, but not a trace could I find. It seemed that she had dropped out of the world, utterly, and that no one had missed her. Finally I was so hungry that I begged a bite to eat and went down by the canal and fell asleep. Here a strange thing happened. I had a dreadful dream. I dreamed that I saw my wife being dragged from the dark waters of the canal. She had the same sad, sweet face, but not the same hair. I awoke in a cold sweat. I was now seized with an irresistible longing to look once more upon the face of the dead woman whom I had seen them fish from the foul waters that morning, and I set out for the morgue. I entered unnoticed and there lay the dead woman with her white hands folded upon her dead breast. She had the same sad, sweet face, but not the same hair, but it was she—it was my wife."

The vag let his head fall so that his eyes rested upon the ground. Patsy fished something from his vest and holding it out to the man, said: "Here's a one-dollar bill and a three-dollar meal ticket—which will you have?"

"Gi' me the pie-card."

"Which shows you're not a regular bum," said Patsy.

"No," said the man, eyeing the meal ticket with its twenty-one unpunched holes. "I never cared for liquor, only once in a while when a bum makes a lift I take a nip just to stop the awful gnawing, cramping pain of hunger, but it only makes you feel worse afterwards. But it's interesting," said the

tramp, thoughtfully. "If it were not for the hunger and cold this new life that I have dropped into wouldn't be half bad. You get a closer glimpse of the miseries of mankind and a better notion of the causes that bring it all about. It educates you. Now take this fight for instance. You fellows feel sure of success, but I know better. Only two men of all the vast army of strikers have deserted so far, but wait. Wait till the pain of hunger hits you and doubles you up like a jack-knife, and it's sure to come. Behind the management there are merciless millions of money: behind the strikers the gaunt wolf of hunger stalks in the snow. Can you beat a game like that? Never. And after all what right have you and your people to expect mercy at the hands of organized capital? Does the Union show mercy to men like me? To escape the blight of the black-list I changed my name. Three times I found work, but in each instance the company were forced to discharge me or have a strike. I was not a Union man and so had to steal a ride out of town. Once I asked a farmer for work and he set me to digging post holes and every time a man came by I hid myself in the grass. 'What you hidin' fur?' the farmer asked. Then I told him that I didn't belong to the Union.

"'What Union?' says he.

"'The post-hole Union' says I—'in fact, I don't belong to any Union.'

"'They ain't no post-hole Union,' says the farmer indignantly, 'an' you know it. What you're givin' me is hog-wash—you've been stealin'. Here's a quarter fur what you've done—now git.'

"I tried to reason with him, but he only shook his thick head and began whistling for his dog, and I got. Yes, pardner, it seems to me that the tyranny of organized capital and the tyranny of organized labor are close competitors, and in their wake come the twin curses—the black-list and the boycot. Hand in hand they go, like red liquor and crime. But you can't right these wrongs the way you're headed now," said the philosopher. "Everything is against you. Wealth works wonders. The press, the telephone through which the public talks back to itself, is hoarse with the repetition of the story of your wrong-doings. Until the Government puts a limit to the abuses of trusts and monopolies, and organized labor has learned that there are other interests which have rights under the Constitution, there will be no peace on earth, no good will toward man. When the trusts are controlled, and labor submits its grievances to an impartial, unbiased board of arbitration, then there will be peace and plenty. The wages that you are now losing and the money squandered by vulgar and ignorant leaders, will then be used in building up and beautifying homes. The time thrown away in useless agitation and in idleness will be spent for the intellectual advancement of working men, and the millions of money lost in wrecked railroads will find its way to the pockets of honest investors."

While this lecture, which interested Patsy, was being delivered the two men had become oblivious of their surroundings, but now the wild cry of a mob in a neighboring street, the rattle of sticks and stones and the occasional bark of a six-shooter brought them back to the business before them.

Wave after wave the rioters rolled against the little band of officers, but like billows that break upon a stony shore they were forced to roll back again. Like the naked minions of Montezuma, who hurled themselves against the armored army of the Spaniards, the strikers and their abetters were invariably beaten back with bruised heads and broken bones. If a luckless striker fell he was trampled upon by the horses of the mounted police or kicked into unconsciousness by the desperate deputies.

"Can you get me out of this so I can have a go at this pie-card?" asked the man.

"Yas," said Patsy, leaping into the car. "Skin off your coat."

When the two men had exchanged coats and caps the vag strolled leisurely down the track and in a little while Patsy followed. He had not gone three cars before the mob saw him and with the cry of "The scab! the scab!" sent a shower of sticks and stones after the flying brakeman. A rock struck Patsy on the head and he fell to the ground. The cap, which he had worn well over his eyes, fell off, and he was recognized by one of the strikers before his ribs could be kicked in. "Begad," said the leader of the mob, "it's the singin' brakeman. Th' bum have robbed 'im uv 'es clothes an' giv' us the slip," and they picked Patsy up and carried him away to the hospital.

CHAPTER SIXTH

Three kinds of meetings were held by the strikers. Public meetings, open to everybody, union meetings, open to any member of the several organizations engaged in the strike, and secret sessions held by the various Brotherhoods, to which only members of that particular order were admitted.

Many things were said and done at these secret sessions that were never printed, or even mentioned outside the lodge-room, save when a detective happened to be a member, or when a member happened to be a detective.

At one of these meetings, held by the striking firemen, the head of that organization startled the audience with the declaration that the strike was going to end disastrously for the strikers. In fact, he said, the strike was already lost. They were beaten. The only point to be determined was as to the extent of the thrashing. This red rag, flung in the faces of the "war faction," called forth hisses and hoots from the no-surrender element. A number of men were on their feet instantly, but none with the eloquence, or even the lung power to shut the chief off. Many of the outraged members glanced over at Cowels, who always sat near the little platform at the end of the hall in order that he might not keep his admirers waiting when they called for a speech. The greatest confusion prevailed during the address of the head of the house. Cowels, the recognized leader of the war party, sat silently in his place, though frequently called upon to defend the fighters. As their chief went on telling them of the inevitable ruin that awaited the strikers, the more noisy began to accuse him of selling them out. One man wanted to know what he got for the job, but the master, feeling secure in that he was doing his duty, gave no heed to what his traducers were saying. Amid all the turmoil Cowels sat so quietly that some of the more suspicious began to guess, audibly, that he was "in with the play." But there was no play, and if there had been Cowels would not have been in with it. Cowels was thinking. Suddenly he leaped upon his chair and yelled: "Throw 'im out!" He did not use the finger of scorn upon the master, or even look in his direction. He merely glared at the audience and commanded it to "Throw 'im out!"

"We are fighting a losing fight," repeated the chief, "and you who fight hardest here will be first to fall," and he looked at Cowels as he spoke. "It could not be pleasant to me, even with your respectful attention, to break this news to you. I do it because it is my duty. But now, having said what I had to say, let me assure you that if a majority of you elect to continue the fight, I will lead you, and I promise that every man of you shall have his fill."

This last declaration was rather a cooler for Cowels. It took a vast amount of wind out of his sails, but he was on his feet and so had to make a speech. He was not very abusive, but managed to make it plain that there were others ready and able to lead if their leader failed to do his duty. When he had succeeded in getting his train of thought out over the switches his hearers, especially the no-surrenderers, began to enthuse. His speech was made picturesque by the introduction of short rhymes, misquotations from dead poets, and tales that had never been told in type. "If," he exclaimed dramatically, "to use a Shakesperian simile, the galled wench be jaded, let him surrender his sword to some one worthy of the steel."

The orator worked the Shakesperian pedal so hard that some of his hearers expressed a desire to know more about the distinguished poet. Finally, when he became too deep for them, a man with a strong clear voice shouted a single word—the name of a little animal whose departure from a sinking ship makes sailors seek the shore—and Cowels closed like a snuff-box.

Now the casual observer would say of the great orator: he has money; his family is not in want. But the statement would have been incorrect.

The Cowelses, like hundreds of other families, were without money, without credit, and would shortly be without food. The last money they had received from the Brotherhood had gone to pay the interest on the money due the Benevolent Building Association, for fuel, and to pay the milkman who was bringing milk for the baby. It would be forty or fifty days before another assessment could be

made and the money collected. The outlook was gloomy. Mr. Hawkins had called again and offered ten dollars a month for the little spare room on the second floor, but Cowels would not consent.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.