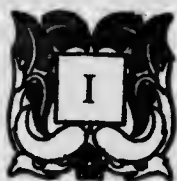


THE SECOND GENERATION

CHAPTER I

"PUT YOUR HOUSE IN ORDER!"



N six minutes the noon whistle would blow. But the workmen—the seven hundred in the Ranger-Whitney flour mills, the two hundred and fifty in the Ranger-Whitney cooperage adjoining—were, every man and boy of them, as hard at it as if the dinner rest were hours away. On the threshold of the long room where several scores of filled barrels were being headed and stamped there suddenly appeared a huge figure, tall and broad and solid, clad in a working suit originally gray but now white with the flour dust that saturated the air, and coated walls and windows both within and without. At once each of the ninety-seven men and boys was aware of that presence and unconsciously showed it by putting on extra "steam." With swinging step the big figure crossed the packing room. The gray-white face held straight ahead, but the keen blue eyes paused upon each worker and each task. And every "hand" in those two great factories knew how all-seeing that glance was—critical, but just; exacting, but encouraging. All-seeing, in this instance, did not mean merely fault-seeing.

Hiram Ranger, manufacturing partner and controlling owner of the Ranger-Whitney Company of St. Christopher and Chicago, went on into the cooperage, leaving energy behind him, rousing it before him. Many times, each working day, between seven in the morning and six at night, he made the tour of those two establishments. A miller by inheritance and training, he had