

with the gent," he said, "an' him havin' given me the five, why of course I went prepared to hiss and groan for all I was worth. So did Jacky here, as he had a fiver, too. Then up jumps this 'ere young giantic chap and spiles the game. I wish I knowed who he was, I'd spile his face for him."

"Now, then, boys, let us get to business."

The speaker was an elderly man, tall and broad-chested, who stood with his back to the stove, while in his hand he held a long, narrow sheet of paper. His eyes, severely dark, were fixed on it, and his compressed lips gave a look of determination to his broad, beardless face. The flashes of light from the stove flickered across the white curly locks of hair that hung straggling from the back of his head. The men in the room sat in breathless suspense, narrowly eyeing him as if they expected him to speak. For a time there was silence, and then he raised his eyes and glanced slowly round the room—eyes black as coals, contrasting strangely with his white hair and almost colorless face.

"The first thing is the tiling of the door. We all know what a lodge meetin' is. Well, this is summat more. This is more important nor any lodge meetin'. They may talk about the Labor Party—well, we're the advance guard o' the Labor Party. Unions is all very well, but there