

the strikers' committee. He knew the men were right. But because he put himself in the psychic state of Markham he could see a way to be even more devious and crooked and mysterious than Markham had been. His days with Markham were numbered. The success or failure of this interview would settle that. Markham had no love for Hoag. Out of this strike interview he would discover how much he had to fear him. In fact it was because he wished to make a show of treating with the men at all and at the same time wanted to estimate Hoag that Markham planned the meeting. At heart he believed Hoag was some sort of Socialist, though he had never said so.

"Rag-tag democracy!" he muttered, in a web of smoke, as he wondered how Hoag was getting along with the men.

And here was Hoag in a small room at Labor Hall doing his master's work—impersonating Markham as he delivered the message, even to the inflections and the gutturals; doing it so well that the five hardfaced men laughed themselves out of their coldness.

Hoag's manner swiftly changed. Hands on the corners of the long table, he said,

"I know the man. He will beat you. He has a strange but secret power of which I am not yet sure. It is organization. You have only begun to see the ABC of it. So long as Henry Markham is at the head of Markhams, Ltd., every wheel, every boiler, every pound of coal, every ingot, every human body—will be dominated by him. It is modern competition. Every manufacturer in the country works it. Labor is—international."

Hoag paused to get the effect.

The five exchanged glances; trying to agree among themselves as to whether this man was the hand of Esau and the voice of Jacob.

"Labor must flow from country to country, as needed. Tariffs are for materials. If any of you men want to cross the border, you should be allowed. Your unions are international. There should be no Alien Labor Law against them. The future of labor is to control the world by increasing production, wages and well-being. The world's real capital is labor and raw material. But we are a long way from realizing that. To do so now would mean riot, anarchy, social upheavals the world over."

"Quit preaching!" said one. But the others said to that one, "Shut up!"

They listened to Hoag, who was not even listening to himself. He delivered the message of his boss, when he knew that the sentiment of the men was strangely against it and even more strangely in league with himself. Markham had intended him to convey a crooked meaning. He partly knew why. Obeying an impulse which he could not control and which seemed to be a phantom greater than himself, he stirred up the men to resist, to oppose—just as Markham had wished.

But their opposition took a form that Markham had not expected.

"This committee reports to the men in favor of—going back to work," said the chairman.

Hoag looked at them somewhat blankly as he rose.

"You can't beat him by staying out," he said. "He has other means of fighting you. But you are men, not slaves. You don't need to believe me. Act as you see fit."

Some men have felt somewhat the blur and the uplift and the vibration that Hoag had just then—from liquor. He heard his own voice like one in a dream. The faces of the men as he turned to leave the room were a fuzzle of unreality. They were like spectres representing labor.

XXVI.

A Confidential Talk

ALL the newspapers reported that the Markham strike was declared off. According to most of them Mr. Markham had made certain minor concessions and the good sense of the strikers had averted a bad tie-up of one of the greatest industries in the country at a time when continued production was necessary in the interest of stock-selling for the great expansion arising out of the Munro Mine and all its accessory enterprises.

"Now I'm sure you are pleased," said Helen.

His reply was in his face. Markham did not send for Hoag. He made a note of Hoag. He did not tell her that what he had wanted Hoag to accomplish was to get the men to refuse to go back; then he would show them and the public what resources he had for fighting strikes.

"Your Mr. Hoag goes off," he said jerkily.

"Not my Mr. Hoag. What have I do with him?"

"As much as anybody. I am frank with you about him. I offered him a big thing to stay on. He refused it. I gave him this job to do. He has bungled it. Those men were to have stayed out. He has given them the wrong cue. He does not know me. But you do."

"I am not so sure of that."

"But I shall win," he said.

"You have already won," she tantalized. "Your whistles have blown. The newspapers—"

"Damn the press!" he shouted. "Most of all that rag the Clarion. It was their doings as much as any. But it does not know me. They don't know that I'm the kind of a man that can't be beaten. I tell you I won't have democracy in my shops. I recognize the unions—only to show them that I am master, and to influence the press. You know that."

In a mood like this he credited her with knowing many things which she had to guess at. There were some things about Henry Markham that she did not know. This confidence that not even the unions could beat him was beyond her as yet. Perhaps she had an inkling of it. And what did Mr. Hoag know? He would never tell her now. Things were changing very swiftly from the day when Martin Hoag was the book-keeper for old Mr. Markham, the one man in whom he placed the most intimate confidence because of his peculiar honesty, his insight into people, his industry and everything else that made Martin Hoag the most interesting man she knew outside of Henry Markham.

Now Hoag was to go. And she knew somehow that Henry Markham feared him.

XXVII.

Poundem and the Clarion

WHEN Martin Hoag took himself bodily out of Markhams, Ltd., he left a strange influence behind. All it was he had not begun to find out. He went at once to the Clarion. Poundem, the editor, a chunky, restless man with coal-black eyes and a perpetual fighting grin took him on.

"You down Markhams, Ltd.," he said, "and I'll double your salary. We've got to get that man and make him a terrible example to all the other labor-sweaters. He's the hardest to get. But when we get him the rest will be easy. He's the dragon. You understand."



These men had come in by ship, landing at Halifax or Quebec.

Poundem knew of the offer Markham had made Hoag, and what it meant. He had some vague idea of Hoag himself when he gave him carte blanche to conduct a department in the Saturday issue, setting forth any human doctrines he knew that could lift people out of their workaday routine. Poundem was oddly sympathetic for a practical man.

"I have no use for psychics myself," he confessed. "But believe me, if there's one thing we've got to do nowadays it's to get people out into a world bigger than the business that enslaves them. Civilization, Mr. Hoag, doesn't civilize some people. Drudgery damns millions to make thousands in places like Rosemount Hill and the opera boxes get what they call the vision of life."

Poundem had all the physical side of the thing at his finger ends. He saw in this timid, yet daring, man who had been let out by Markham the other side of the problem.

Hoag's Saturday articles on the unseen lives that men and women were born to live and which they miss because of the slavery of civilization were not signed by him. But they were read by thousands. He did them in his spare moments. They were the casual suggestions that came to him as he went about labor-reporting for the Clarion.

In his work as reporter he dug up many things never before seen in that paper. It was a new and unfettered life, with the edges of hard-luck always next to him. Of course he was refused admittance to the Markham premises. He expected that. But he went among the men at their homes. He learned that there was bigger trouble yet brewing at Markhams. The conditions had gone worse. Mr. Markham was driving them as never before. He was gradually forcing men out, not by strikes, but by wearing them out. As fast as they went—even faster—he replaced them by foreigners. In a few months, as Hoag told Poundem, practically the whole of Markhams would be manned by foreign labor that on no account could be induced to join the unions, because Markham made conditions for these men so favorable even while he got results in labor that he had never surpassed, that unions meant nothing to them. These men had come in by ship, landing at Halifax and Quebec. They were good workers who knew nothing about strikes.

"By God! we'll teach them," said Poundem.

And the story went in the Clarion, written by Hoag and featured up by Poundem. But the public saw nothing of it, except those who read the Clarion. All the other people read in their customary papers again and again how Henry Markham was carrying out his great scheme of the Munro Mine which would be shipping its first ore by early summer at the latest; his railway and his docks; his ship lines and his smelters. But that was not all. Mr. Markham was not only

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"I recognize the unions only to show them that I master them and to influence the press."