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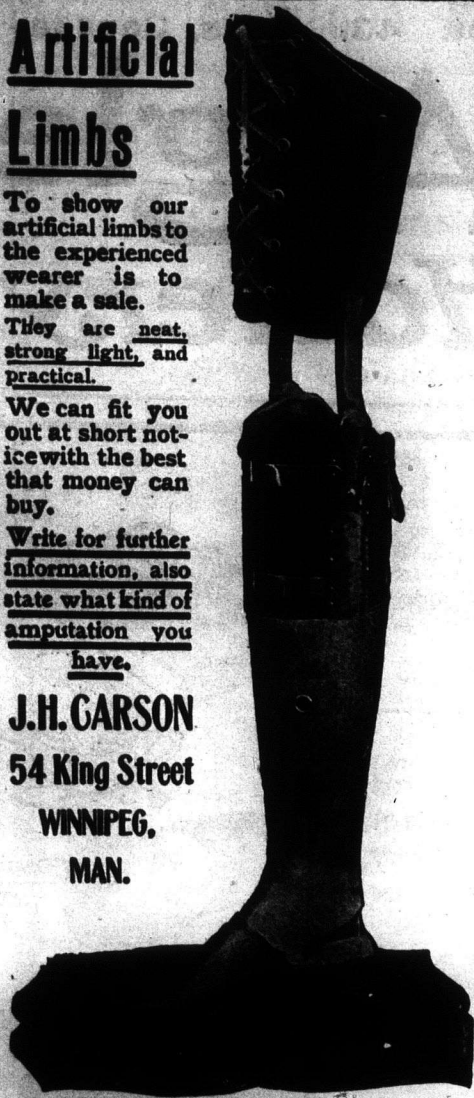
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IN 2 LB. BOXES AND 1 LB. TABLETS AT YOUR GROCERS.

Johnny's Job.

By OCTAVE THANET

THE day was so warm that the men at the steel-works were all mopping their brows with the back of their hands. Nevertheless the furnaces were flaming and the great red and black iron sheds were penetrated with the incessant pounding roar of the rolls.

Johnny Burke, the new heater's helper, cast a keen glance out of his long lashed Irish gray eyes at Larson, the heater. The tall Swede's face was flushed and strange of expression; he flung his tools noiselessly into the bosh. Both the drag-down and the charger glanced askance at him, exchanging opinions in pantomime; but Johnny did not speak to any of them, he walked over to the roller. That great man was tapping the rolls with his tongs, whistling softly.

"Say," said Johnny in his ear, "something's the matter with Larson, he ain't been round to reverse the furnace for half an hour. I reversed it myself, a little while ago, I didn't like to before; but the bridge was 'most awash—all melting!"

The roller nodded. "I told the rougher the next piece of hard iron he got from him to send it back; he would before only he's a friend of Knute's. Well, so'm I a friend of Knute's; but we can't have the turn spoiled with cracked iron."



... learned to put a stout front on his hardships ... and hide his burns.

"Looks like he had a jag on him," said Johnny, in a dispassionate way.

"That's it," the roller returned, gloomily, "he's had some sort of trouble with his wife. 'Jealous I guess; and he was drinking yesterday. Never knew him to drink before. But these sober fellers, when they get to drinking, go all to pieces. It's an awful pity. Knute's a pretty good feller. Say, do you think you can kinder watch the furnace? Go right ahead, he won't notice!"

"I guess so," said Johnny; but his heart swelled within him. "I had a heater's job last."

"How'd you lose it?"

"Strike. We lost it; and they didn't take on all the men. There was a lot of married men wanted to get back, bad; they didn't want to move. And I was single and foot-loose—so I skipped. Well, maybe—flushing with his effort to be candid—"maybe they wouldn't have took me on if I'd asked. I didn't ask."

"I guess you're white," said the roller; "well, keep your eye on things!"

He gazed after Johnny's curly black head and handsome profile with a new interest, but far from suspecting that he had heard the disappointment of Johnny's life. To be sure Johnny had said nothing of the girl.

Johnny was a new man, taken on a week ago, on Leroy's recommendation. Leroy was an old friend of Knute Larsen's. Knute was popular in the works, not only in his own little realm, the eight inch mill, where the heater has almost equal powers with the roller, but in the other mills and in the office. To the office there was one exception, the assistant superintendent. He was a young man who rated his own knowledge high. During the superintendent's absence he was in charge; and he had already had a dispute with Knute about the "scrap." The "scrap" was of his

own adventurous buying; and, naturally, when the turns were disappointing he blamed the heaters, blamed the rollers and blamed Knute Larsen more than all.

Knute, however, only blamed the "scrap"; he did not pass his superior's



Johnny mended it.

bad temper on to Johnny; and Johnny was grateful.

He respected Larsen, not only because he was a remarkably good heater, who always sent out "nice soft iron," but because he was tall—Johnny himself being very short. Knute had soft blue eyes and a yellow beard. He was taciturn but cheerful in his silent way; and liked to listen to other men's jokes, smiling with his eyes. The last man, one would think, to jeopardize his high wages by drinking. "A married man, too," thought Johnny, severely, "if I ever get married"—he flushed and his eye sparkled; and he stood for a moment absently gazing at nothing, while his whole life seemed to drift before him.

First he saw himself a little straightening boy, barely nine, dizzy with the glory of working in an iron-mill and having wages of his own to bring home to his mother every fortnight. His father was dead. He had three sisters, all younger than he; he was the man of the family, his mother always called him, "Mother's man." His poor mother! even after all those years the lump climbed into Johnny's throat as he remembered how the three little sisters had all died in one dreadful week of diphtheria, and how he stood alone by his mother, beside the last and smallest little grave. Somehow the shade of little Rosy "who was so cute" was most vivid to him of all; and his mother's grief for her baby was heartbreaking. "But I've got you, son," she sobbed, "mother's little man—O Johnny, be careful!"

I fear Johnny was hardly careful in the way she meant; he had the name of being "the reckless little devil in the works;" and his mother's hair would have turned gray could she have viewed him cheerily dodging the wrig-



"Miss Glenn's gone."

gling, glowing red serpents that dove at him from the finishing rolls. But he was careful of his mother; he learned to put a stout front on his hardships, to keep his kicks and cuffs to himself and hide his burns and get up in the black winter mornings without calling, although his muscles had not rested from last night's ache; and he would make faces for the pain, while he dress-

ed. He thought of none of these things now; his lips were working and he brushed the wet out of his eyes because he remembered how happy his mother was when he was made strand boy, happier than she had been since the little girls died. She laughed, she laughed out loud! "Think of you only thirteen and earning most as much as your ma! Oh, if your pa could see you this day! If he could know how you've been mother's man"—and then she kissed him and sorely scared him by crying bitterly. Was it, as she said, for the joy and for remembering how proud his father had always been of his only son, or was it because she knew she had the sickness on her? "I'm glad I got the raise that week," muttered Johnny, his eyes dimming. Next week, he had no mother to be glad for him. He went to live with his aunt. She was sorry for the lad, who made no complaints and only cried at night for his mother, but she had married a widower with six small children, each one, she was accustomed to say, bad in a different way from the others, so she had scant leisure for "mothering" Johnny. At fifteen Johnny felt himself a man; and not a youngster in the works got so many cuffs and oaths from the roughers whose tongs he was using the minute their backs were turned. Plenty of kindness the roughers gave him, between deserved reproofs for meddling; and he picked up ambition and rude notions of honor and a reverence for the Amalgamated Association. The Lodge of the Association and the Lodge of the Knights of Pythias gave Johnny most of his education, both moral and intellectual. Never did either association or order have a catechumen who listened more eagerly to teachings of the fraternal duties of brothers in the lodge.

"It's the most wonderful thing in the world," mused Johnny often, during the first year of his membership. "Well, I guess there's one thing that beats 'em all," he thought today, "beats even the knights." And Johnny sighed. For that one thing was love. When Johnny was twenty-five he fell in love. It was soon after he got his job as heater; and a light heart is easy to move. She was a clerk in a dry-goods shop; our English cousins would call it a haberdashery's. She boarded at Mrs. Heller's, only two blocks away from Johnny's aunt's house, a clean, quiet place, very respectable and not expensive. Johnny still boarded with his aunt. He could have found a pleasanter place for his money; and he didn't enjoy the nightly companionship of his youngest cousin, known in the family circles as "Kicker"; but no one else would sleep with the child, and his aunt needed the board money; hence Johnny stayed and paid it, scrupulously in advance. He furnished his bare little room, making it so comfortable that his aunt always gave it to her mother-in-law when she visited them, while Johnny camped elsewhere—with Kicker. The girl, Miss Dora Glenn (Johnny knew her name before he knew her), rode a bicycle; and almost daily, returning from his work, he met Miss Glenn returning from hers. He admired her riding; then he admired her. One day, his heart curdled beholding, a desperate "object-struck" beginner, a man of herculean frame, charge down on a baby-carriage, and Miss Glenn pedal swiftly in between the doomed infant and the human catapult. Johnny scorching down to her arrived in time to see the collision and hear the crash. She was not hurt—the man had toppled over at a touch; one can scarcely say that he lost his balance, he having so little balance to lose—but her wheel was broken. Johnny mended it; after he had given the unhappy beginner his opinion of a man that couldn't steer, coming out on the street. "You best walk home," says Johnny, sternly; "and be thankful you ain't a murderer; you ain't safe on a wheel!"

The giant limped meekly away, pushing his unharmed wheel, while Johnny addressed himself to repairs, assisted by Miss Glenn. She had taken off her gloves. Once her hand touched his. It was a very white hand and felt cool and lovely smooth; and somehow, although it was so different, Johnny's memory flashed back to the touch of his mother's hand on his cheek. "Ma'd like her," he thought. "Oh, I wish I could tell ma about her."

He noticed that she did not talk like the Pennsylvania girls and long afterward, the rich, leisurely cadences of her