

THE WIRE TAPPERS

them! This was the man at whose whisper a hundred thousand spindles had ceased to revolve, and at whose nod, in cotton towns half a world away, a thousand families either labored or were idle, had food or went hungry.

A momentary lull came in the storm, a nervous spasm of uncertainty. It seemed only a sheer caprice, but in sixty seconds the overstrained price had fallen away again twenty points. Curry, stroking his small mustache, stepped in closer to the circular brass railing of the Pit, and said a quiet word or two to his head-broker. His rosy face was expressionless, and he pulled languidly at his little mustache once more. But his motion had started the upward tendency again. Both May and July cotton bounded up, point by point, capriciously, unreasonably, inexorably, as though at the wafting of a magician's wand.

When the excitement seemed at its highest, when the shrill-noted chorus of sellers and buyers was shrieking its loudest, Samuel Curry went out to eat his luncheon. This was at once noticed and commented on,—for dozens of eyes, both eager and haggard, watched the leader's every move and expression.

The change that swept over the Pit was magical. The tumult subsided. The shouting men about the brass railing stopped to take breath. The sallow-faced young man who chalked prices up on the Pit-