

at the next floor down to take on a pair of maids, he strolled over to the shaft, and without frills or verbiage, consigned me and my detail to the deepest perdition. But I liked him. He had pluck and was unafraid, and he knew, as well as I, that Death clutched him close."

"But how could you, Leith," I cried, the picture of the consumptive lad strong before me, "how could you treat him so barbarously?"

Leith laughed dryly. "My dear fellow, how often must I explain to you your confusions? Orthodox sentiment and stereotyped emotion master you. And then your temperament! You are really incapable of rational judgments. Cerberus? Pshaw! A flash expiring, a mote of fading sparkle, a dim-pulsing and dying organism—pouf! a snap of the fingers, a puff of breath, what would you? A pawn in the game of life. Not even a problem. There is no problem in a still-born babe, nor in a dead child. They never arrived. Nor did Cerberus. Now for a really pretty problem—"

"But the local color?" I prodded him.

"That's right," he replied. "Keep me in the running. Well, I took my handful of copy paper down to the railroad yards (for local color), dangled my legs from a side-door Pullman, which is another name for a box car; and ran off the stuff. Of course I made it clever and brilliant, and all that, with my little unanswerable slings at the State and my social paradoxes, and withal made it concrete enough to dissatisfy the average citizen. From the tramp standpoint, the constabulary of the township was particularly rotten, and I proceeded to open the eyes of the good people. It is a proposition, mathematically demonstrable, that it costs the community more to arrest, convict and confine its tramps in jail than to send them as guests, for like periods of time, to a first-class hotel. And this I developed, giving the facts and figures, the constable fees and the mileage, and the court and jail expenses. Oh, it was convincing, and it was true; and I did it in a lightly humorous fashion which fetched the laugh and left the sting. The main objection to the system, I contended, was the defrauding and robbery of the tramp. The good money which the community paid out for him should enable him to riot in luxury instead of rotting in dungeons. I even drew the figures so fine as to permit him not only to live in a good hotel, but to smoke two twenty-five cent cigars and indulge in a ten cent shine each day, and still not cost the taxpayers so much as they were accustomed to pay for his conviction and jail entertainment. And, as subsequent events proved, it made the taxpayers wince."

"One of the constables I drew to the life; nor did I forget a certain Sol Glenhart, as rotten a police judge to be found between the seas. And this I say out of a vast experience. While he was notorious in local tramping, his civic sins were not only not unknown, but a crying reproach to the townspeople. Of course, I refrained from mentioning name or habitat, drawing the picture in an impersonal, composite sort of way, which none the less blinded no one to the faithfulness of the local color."

"Naturally, myself a tramp, the tenor of the article was a protest against the maltreatment of the tramp. Cutting the taxpayers to the pits of their purses threw them open to sentiment, and then I tossed the sentiment, lumps and chunks of it. Trust me, it was excellently done, and the rhetoric—say! just listen to the tail of my peroration:

"So, as we go mooching along the drag, with a sharp lamp out for John Law, we cannot help remembering that we are beyond the pale; that our ways are not their ways; and that the ways of John Law with us are different from his ways with other men. Poor lost souls, waiting for a crust in the dark, we know full well our helplessness and ignominy. And well may we repeat after a stricken brother over-seas: 'Our pride it is to know no spur of pride.' Men has forgotten us; God has for-

gotten us; only are we remembered by the harpies of justice, who prey upon our distress and coin our sighs and tears into bright shining dollars."

"Incidentally, my picture of Sol Glenhart, the police judge, was good. A striking likeness, and unmistakable, with phrases tripping along like this: 'This crook-nosed, gross-bodied harpie; this civic sinner, this judicial highwayman; possessing the morals of the Tenderloin and an honor which thieves' honor puts to shame; who compounds criminality with shyster-sharks, and in atonement railroads the unfortunate and impecunious to rotting cells—and so forth, and so forth, style sophomoric and devoid of the dignity and tone one would employ in a dissertation on 'Surplus Value' or 'The Fallacies of Marxism,' but just the stuff the dear public likes."

"Humph!" grunted Spargo when I put the copy in his fist. "Swift gait you strike, my man."

"I fixed an hypnotic eye on his vest pocket and he passed out one of his superior cigars, which I burned while he ran through the stuff. Twice or thrice he looked over the top of the paper at me, searchingly, but said nothing till he had finished."

"Where'd you work, you pencil-pusher?" he asked.

"My maiden effort," I simpered, modestly, scraping one foot and faintly simulating embarrassment.

"Maiden hell! What salary do you want?"

"Nay, nay," I answered. "No salary in mine, thank you most to death. I am a free, downtrodden American citizen, and no man shall say my time is his."

"Save John Law," he chuckled.

"Save John Law," said I.

"How did you know I was bucking the police department?" he demanded, abruptly.

"I didn't know, but I knew you were in training," I answered. "Yesterday morning a charitably inclined female presented me with three biscuits, a piece of cheese, and a funeral slab of chocolate cake, all wrapped in the current Clarion, wherein I noted an unholy glee because the Cowbell's candidate for chief of police had been turned down. Likewise I learned the municipal election was at hand, and put two and two together. Another mayor, and the right kind, means new police commissioners; new police commissioners means new chief of police; new chief of police means Cowbell's candidate; ergo, your turn to play."

"He stood up, shook my hand, and emptied his pithoric vest pocket. I put them away and puffed on the old one."

"You'll do," he jubilated. "This stuff" (patting my copy) "is the first gun of the campaign. You'll touch off many another before we're done. I've been looking for you for years. Come on in, on the editorial."

"But I shook my head."

"Come, now!" he admonished, sharply. "No shenanagin! The Cowbell must have you. It hungers for you, craves after you, won't be happy till it gets you. What say?"

"In short, he wrestled with me, but I was bricks, and at the end of half an hour the only Spargo gave it up."

"Remember," he said, "any time you reconsider, I'm open. No matter where you are, wire me and I'll send the ducats to come at once."

"I thanked him, and asked the pay for my copy—dope, he called it."

"Oh, regular routine," he said. "Get it the first Thursday after publication."

"Then I'll have to trouble you for a few scads until—"

"He looked at me and smiled. 'Better cough up, eh?'"

"Sure," I said. "Nobody to identify me, so make it cash."

"And cash it was made, thirty plunks (a plunk is a dollar, my dear Anak), and I pulled my freight. eh? Oh, departed."

"Pale youth," I said to Cerberus. "I am bounced." (He grinned with pallid joy.) "And in token of the sincere esteem I bear you, receive this little—his eyes flashed and he threw up one hand, swiftly, to guard

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