

"Necessity knows no law," replied the detective. "You wouldn't have me miss the scenes here?"

To play again the role of an amateur photographer had not entered the detective's mind, but the cue now given him by the agent was too good to be lost, and he at once acted upon it.

"Scenes?" replied the agent, and then purposely twisting the word, "What scenery is worth taking at this time of the year?"

The detective inwardly chuckled.

"I spoke of scenes," he said, pointedly, "not scenery; I refer, of course, to the strike. The illustrated papers, such as *The Graphic*, pay handsome prices for photographs of such scenes as might now easily be obtained here. For instance, a photograph of the men's mass meetings or the thronged streets would be especially taking. Then, again, scenes in homes, scenes at the pits, or photographs of prominent strikers, such as Seth Roberts, the chairman of the Strikers' Committee, or George Ford, the secretary, or that impetuous Rake Swinton—all these would make capital pictures, and would fetch a big price."

Stephen Grainger listened aghast. After all was this professed amateur photographer a journalistic artist, and had he come into Trethyn again to cater for the periodicals? And was he more than an artist? Was he a commissioner for some paper and sent down to Trethyn to describe the strike and the condition of the parish?

"That humorous bread-distributing, too, would make a good negative," went on the detective, hugely enjoying the agent's palpable alarm, "especially if attractively headed—Relieving the Starving, for instance, and just a brief sketch of the affair added to explain it. Or, *A Few Pictorial Incidents of the Strike*, in which a variety of things might be worked in. What do you think of it?"

"I think it would be very unbecoming," sharply replied the agent. "It would simply pander to the vanity of the strikers, and make heroes of men who are nothing but criminals."

"Criminals?"

"In that they starve their families by refusing to work, and in more senses than that one. Your pictures

would only prolong the strike indefinitely."

"Then I take it, Mr. Grainger," said the detective, thirsting for information, though not in the least betraying his eagerness to the agent, "that you do not contemplate acceding to the men's demands for the old wage?"

"Certainly not," said Stephen Grainger hotly; "how can I? Do you know, sir, that this estate is already burdened with its heavy expenditure?"

"I understand," said the detective, slowly, "that the new heir is largely squandering its revenues, and that he is taking advantage of Lady Trethyn's ill-health to do so. Don't you think it a shame, Mr. Grainger?"

Stephen Grainger drew himself up to his full height.

"I should like to know," he said haughtily, "where you got that from."

"Oh," replied the detective lightly, "that's a matter of public gossip. I suppose, Mr. Grainger, that it is so? Mr. Arthur Bourne Trethyn is a gambler, is he not?"

"Oh, don't be offended," went on the detective, noticing the agent's rising wrath, and speaking half-sneeringly. "I see you don't care to say anything. Well, p'raps it's wise, being in the position you are. But everybody knows of it, and that he is constantly dunning you for money. That's what makes the men so bitter; they say the reduction is only to help you to keep the spendthrift well supplied with cash to enable him to pay his debts, and to carry on his gambblings."

"Where, may I ask," queried the greatly astonished agent, "did you learn all this rubbish?"

"Rubbish?"

"Yes, rubbish," tartly replied the agent.

"Tush, man," said the detective, with a knowing wink, "it's not rubbish. You know it is not rubbish."

"Where did you learn it?"

"Oh, it's in everybody's mouth, and—"

"Also the subject of general gossip?"

"Decidedly—general gossip," answered the detective. "There are some, of course, who lay all the blame on you, and say that you are vengeful, and that you are reducing the wages to enrich yourself, to re-