

'Yarns and sketches! Oh, I know you and your tricks and your ways,' he answered, shaking his head at me. 'All the same, old man, I owe it to you that I sign myself Confidential Secretary to the Superintendent of Construction with almost unlimited powers.'

'Good man!' I shouted, 'when you are President I'll take an annual pass if you don't mind.'

'You can get a pass out now if you want to come.'

'Not yet. But when do you go?'

'Next week.'

'Next week!' I cried in dismay, thinking of the sweet, pale face of the beautiful little lady in the manse in the country.

'Yes!' he said a little sadly, 'I know what you are thinking of. Seems selfish, but I'm afraid I must go. My particular chief is out there now, over the ears in work and he must have help at once.'

'It's a long way,' I said.

'Yes,' he answered, 'a long way and a big work it will be. They say it is a five years' job.' He paused, and then added, as if to himself, 'and the mother is not very strong any time.'

'Do you think you really ought to go?' I asked. 'You banish yourself, you know, from civilisation and decent society and your—your people have not seen much of you for the last ten years—and—and life is going on, you know.'