

"Glad to see you back, Mr. Haraldson, though," he stared unpleasantly, "you don't look any better for your trip. Curious, you've been in the wars again!"

"Only a scrapping match," said Brand; "and, as to the trip, it was no holiday. I've been away on special service preparing this."

On catching sight of the portmanteau, which Brand now opened, the foreman bristled, but said nothing until he had inspected its contents—a sheaf of paper moulds—"matrices," such as were being prepared on the moulders' table.

"Indeed, Mr. Haraldson!" All human feeling had vanished from the man, leaving him uncompromising and official as a letter-box.

"Ask no questions, Mr. Pederson," said the other frankly, "and I'll tell no lies. My orders are to deliver these to you; they are to replace eight pages of to-night's issue."

"This is absurd!"

"Here"—Brand presented a written order, in which the numbers of the pages were clearly given—"is this absurd?"

Taking a case from his pocket, Mr. Pederson drew out a pair of spectacles, strong-lensed, and put them on with slow deliberation; then, glaring at the order, his harsh face moved now with extreme excitement. "Signed—Marshall Gault." Then, looking up, "This is a forgery."

"It is—a forgery—to justify you afterwards at my expense."

"I shall not need," said the foreman, freezingly, "to be justified. I am an honest man."

"Glad to hear it, Mr. Pederson—wish I were. Now don't be a hypocrite; you know well enough that you're only a slave of the Frailty-Avenger machine, run by Mr. Clewston-Gault."