

"The Bogata people have been good customers of ours in the past," went on Barton, reflectively. "But I have inside information that their credit is wobbly. It is strained, just as ours has been. If we tied up twenty to thirty thousand dollars in their particular line of goods, and then had the goods left on our hands, it might be fatal to the Hapwood-Diller Company, even now.

"The expansion of mercantile values and the increase in profits have not struck our kind of production, as you very well know, Jim. Our stock is not listed among the 'war brides.' Rather it might better be termed a 'war widow.' The company has had a hard pull, Jim. We can't afford to take many chances."

Again the superintendent sat tight and merely nodded. The declining sun delivered slanting rays in through the high windows of the general manager's office. The two men—neither of whom had arrived at thirty years—sat with preternaturally grave faces, one ruminating upon the event that had unexpectedly arisen in the affairs of the concern they had both worked for since boyhood; the other possibly giving much more thought to his own personal matters.

For Jim Mayberry, without being in the least neglectful of his duties as superintendent of the factory, was a person given much to the contemplation of what he called "the prime law of nature: Looking out for Number One." He did, however, suggest: