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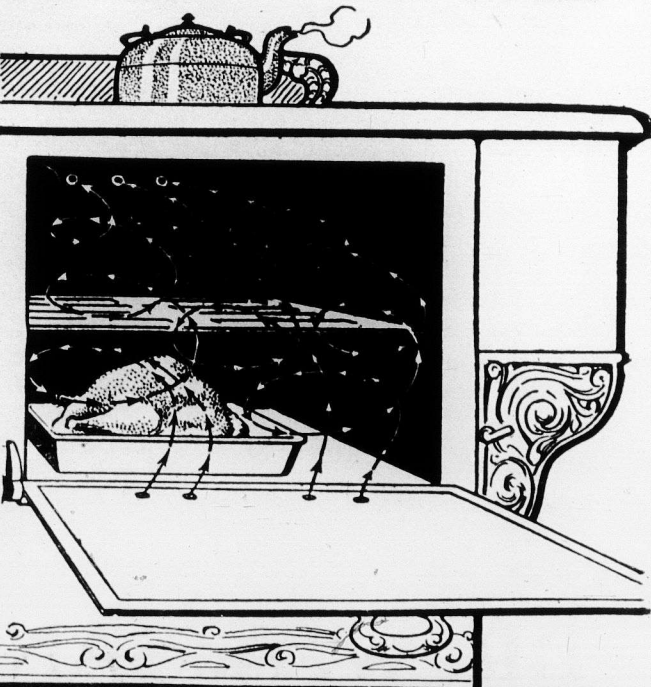
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need. The children were growing up. They ate more. They were going to school, and school-books cost money. And somehow, the faster he worked, the faster climbed the prices of things. Even the rent went up, though the house had fallen from bad to worse disrepair.

He had grown taller; but with his increased height he seemed leaner than ever. Also, he was more nervous. With the nervousness increased his peevishness and irritability. The children had learned by many bitter lessons to fight shy of him. His mother respected him for his earning power, but somehow her respect was tinted with fear.

There was no joyousness in life for him. The procession of the days he never saw. The nights he slept away in twitching unconsciousness. The rest of the time he worked, and his consciousness was machine-consciousness. Outside this his mind was a blank. He had no ideals, and but one illusion, namely, that he drank excellent coffee. He was a work-beast. He had no mental life whatever; yet deep down in the crypts of his mind, unknown to him, were being weighed and sifted every hour of his toil, every movement of his hands, every twitch of his muscles, and preparations were making for a future course of action that would amaze him and all his little world.

It was in the late spring that he came home from work one night aware of an unusual tiredness. There was a keen expectancy in the air as he sat down to the table, but he did not notice. He went through the meal in moody silence, mechanically eating what was before him. The children um'd and ah'd and made smacking noises with their mouths. But he was deaf to them.

"D'y'e know what you're eatin'?" his mother demanded at last, desperately.

He looked vacantly at the dish before him, and vacantly at her. "Floatin' island," she announced triumphantly.

"Oh," he said. "Floatin' island!" the children chorused loudly.

"Oh," he said. And after two or three mouthfuls, he added, "I guess I ain't hungry to-night."

He dropped the spoon, shoved back his chair, and arose wearily from the table.

"An' I guess I'll go to bed." His feet dragged more heavily than usual as he crossed the kitchen floor.

Undressing was a Titan's task, a monstrous futility, and he went weakly as he crawled into bed, one shoe still on. He was aware of a rising, swelling something inside his head that made his brain thick and fuzzy. His lean fingers felt as big as his wrist, while in the ends of them was a remoteness of sensation vague and fuzzy like his brain. The small of his back ached intolerably. All his bones ached. He ached everywhere. And in his head began the shrieking, pounding, crashing, roaring of a million looms. All space was filled with flying shuttles. They darted in and out, intricately, amongst the stars. He worked a thousand looms himself, and ever they speeded up, faster and faster, and his brain unwound, faster and faster, and became the thread that fed the thousand flying shuttles.

He did not go to work the next morning. He was too busy weaving colossal on the thousand looms that ran inside his head. His mother went to work, but first she sent for the doctor. It was a severe attack of la grippe, he said. Jennie served as nurse and carried out his instructions.

It was a very severe attack, and it was a week before Johnny dressed and tottered feebly across the floor. Another week, the doctor said, and he would be fit to return to work. The foreman of the loom-room visited him on Sunday afternoon, the first day of his convalescence. The best weaver in the room, the foreman told his mother. His job would

be held for him. He could come back to work a week from Monday.

"Why don't you thank 'm, Johnny?" his mother asked anxiously.

"He's ben that sick he ain't himself yet," she explained apologetically to the visitor.

Johnny sat hunched up and gazing steadfastly at the floor. He sat in the same position long after the foreman had gone. It was warm outdoors, and he sat on the stoop in the afternoon. Sometimes his lips moved. He seemed lost in endless calculations.

Next morning, after the day grew warm, he took his seat on the stoop. He had pencil and paper this time with which to continue his calculations, and he calculated painfully and amazingly.

"What comes after millions?" he asked at noon, when Will came home from school. "An' how d'y'e work 'em?"

That afternoon finished his task. Each day, but without pencil and paper, he returned to the stoop. He was greatly absorbed in the one tree that grew across the street. He studied it for hours at a time, and was unusually interested when the wind swayed its branches and fluttered its leaves. Throughout the week he seemed lost in a great communion with himself. On Sunday, sitting on the stoop, he laughed aloud, several times, to the perturbation of his



"At last the city was behind him."

mother, who had not heard him laugh in years.

Next morning, in the early darkness, she came to his bed to rouse him. He had had his fill of sleep all week and woke easily. He made no struggle, nor did he attempt to hold onto the bedding when she stripped it from him. He lay quietly, and spoke quietly.

"It ain't no use, ma."

"You'll be late," she said, under the impression that he was stupid with sleep.

"I'm awake, ma, an' I tell you it ain't no use. You might as well let me alone. I ain't goin' to git up."

"But you'll lose your job!" she cried.

"I ain't goin' to git up," he repeated in a strange, passionless voice.

She did not go to work herself that morning. This was sickness beyond any sickness she had ever known. Fever and delirium she could understand; but this was insanity. She pulled the bedding over him and sent Jennie for the doctor.

When that person arrived Johnny was sleeping gently, and gently he awoke and allowed his pulse to be taken.

"Nothing the matter with him," the doctor reported. "Badly debilitated, that's all. Not much meat on his bones."

"He's always been that way," his mother volunteered.

"Now go 'way, ma, an' let me finish my snooze."

Johnny spoke sweetly and placidly, and sweetly and placidly he rolled over on his side and went to sleep.

At ten o'clock he awoke and dressed himself. He walked out into the kitchen, where he found his mother with a frenzied expression on her face.

"I'm goin' nounced, 'an' good-by."

She threw her and sat down st waited patiently "I might a-k sobbing.

"Where?" she ing the apron gazing up at him in which there "I don't know

As he spoke street appeared ness on his inn to lurk just und could see it whe "An' your job "I ain't nev again."

"My God, Jo "don't say that! What he had to her. As a m child deny God, shocked by his

"What's got in demanded, with perativeness. "Figures," he

figures. I've ben in this week, an "I don't see w with it," she sni

Johnny smiled mother was awa at the persisten yishness and irri

"I'll show you tired out. W Moves. I've be I was born. I'm

I ain't goin' to member when I house? I used dozen a day. N

about ten differ bottle. That's moves a day. hundred an' six

One month, on thousan' moves. thousan'—" he

placent benefice pist—"chuck out that leaves a mi -twelve million

"At the loom as much. That million moves a me I've ben a-m a million years."

"Now this we all. I ain't mad an' hours. I to jes' settin' there, doin' nothin'. I

before. I never ben movin' all no way to be ha to do it any mo set, an' set, an' rest some more.

"But what's g an' the children' ingly.

"That's it, 'W he repeated. But there was voice. He had mother's' ambiti

"Long in apple-Somethin' in That'll set your sp lighter than You can hear it neighborin' r

You can see it in nuts along th An' the rustle, An' the bustle

An' the Rusty An' the weedin An' the seedin An' the dryin

There's a busy t sets your sou In the hearty, he apple-pickin'

When the crib is oat-bin runnin An' the crickets straw stack

Then the echo o your voice a An' you hear the freight train

An' the lowin'