

charging him but had been unsuccessful hitherto, as Armstrong was an industrious, conscientious workman and one who had the interests of his fellow-workmen too much at heart to jeopardize the good name of their union by violent and blameworthy behavior on the part of one of its officers.

The brother-in-law of the Superintendent, John Curby was the proprietor of one of the stores patronized by the Company. His profitable duty was to furnish oil for the miners' lamps for which these latter had, however, to pay themselves. Relying on Mr. Atkins' powerful influence to shield him from punishment, he had so shamefully overcharged the miners for this necessary commodity, until these had finally become desperate and on their complaint, the union had forbidden its members to purchase any more oil from Curby, unless he greatly reduced his price. Armstrong with a few others were delegated to inform that worthy of the decision of the union. Curby, furious at what he considered an unwarranted interference in his rights, took occasion to apply the most opprobrious epithets to all union men in general and to Armstrong in particular. On his entrance, Mr. Atkins drew his enraged brother-in-law aside and heard from him the highly colored account of the affair. He began to see his way clear towards the accomplishment of his aim, and he ruthlessly thrust aside all considerations that decency and justice exacted. He walked up to Armstrong and his companion, who were calmly awaiting his decision, and told them in a hard voice that they were discharged for their insubordination, and that all union men, who would not buy oil from Curby would be dismissed in like manner. Indeed the Company did not recognize the right of the Union to exist at all, much less to interfere in its affairs. Furthermore, they were informed that the company would hereafter employ no more union men, and that all who wished to remain in its service would be obliged to sign a written repudiation of the union.

Greatly excited and highly indignant at this arbitrary deed of the coal trust, Armstrong and his companions hastened from the room to report the occurrence. They saw, but too well, that it was a challenge