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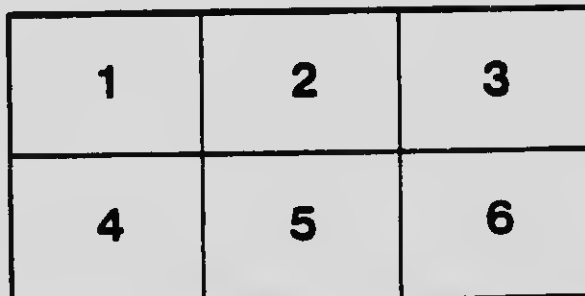
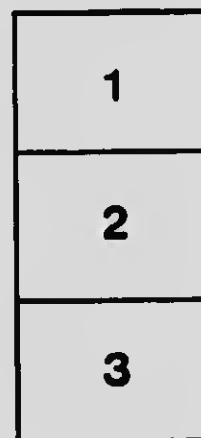
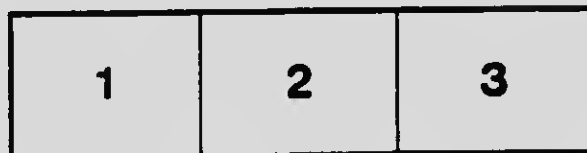
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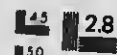
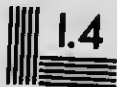
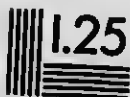
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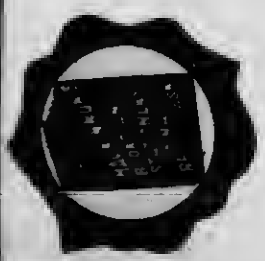
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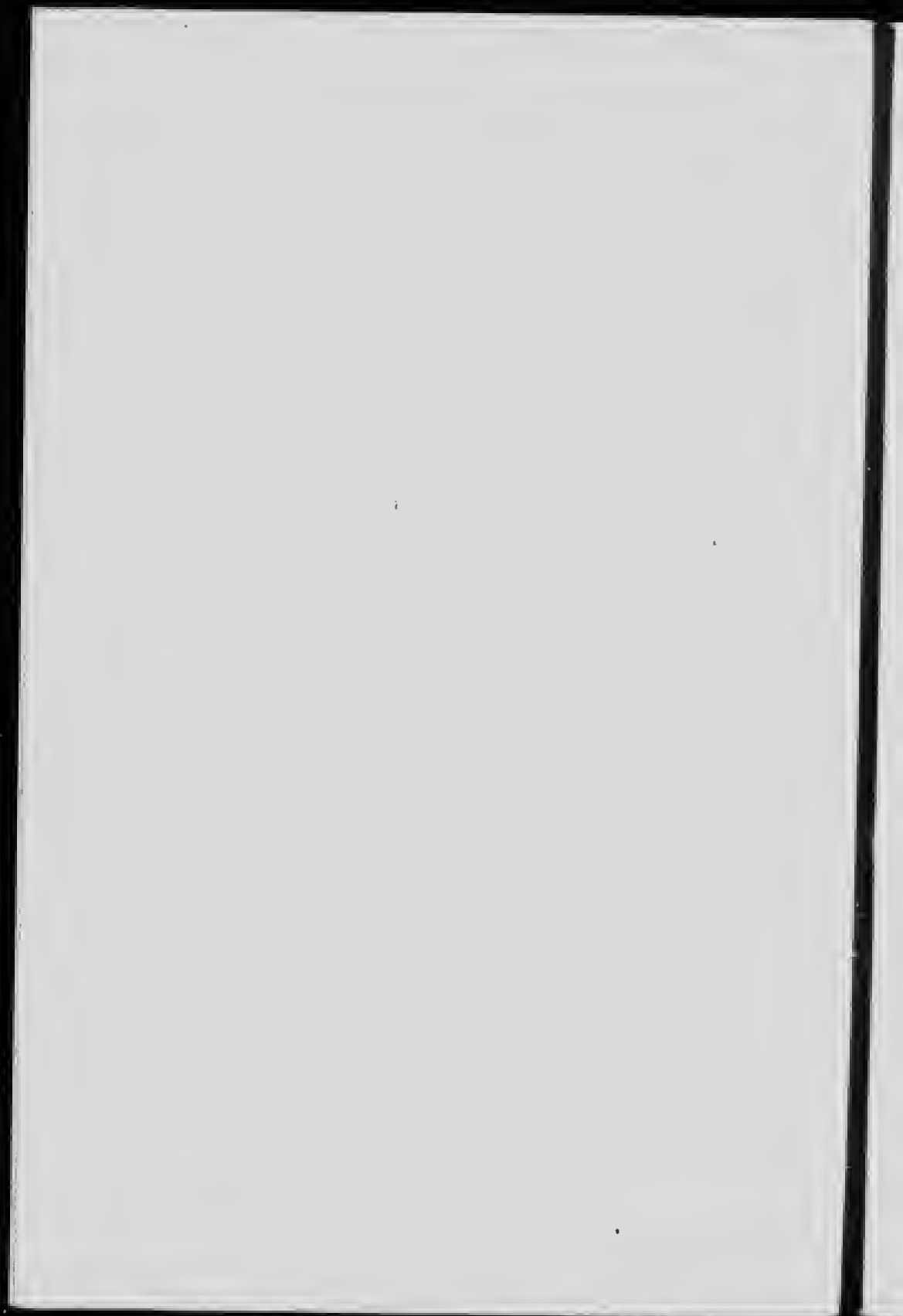
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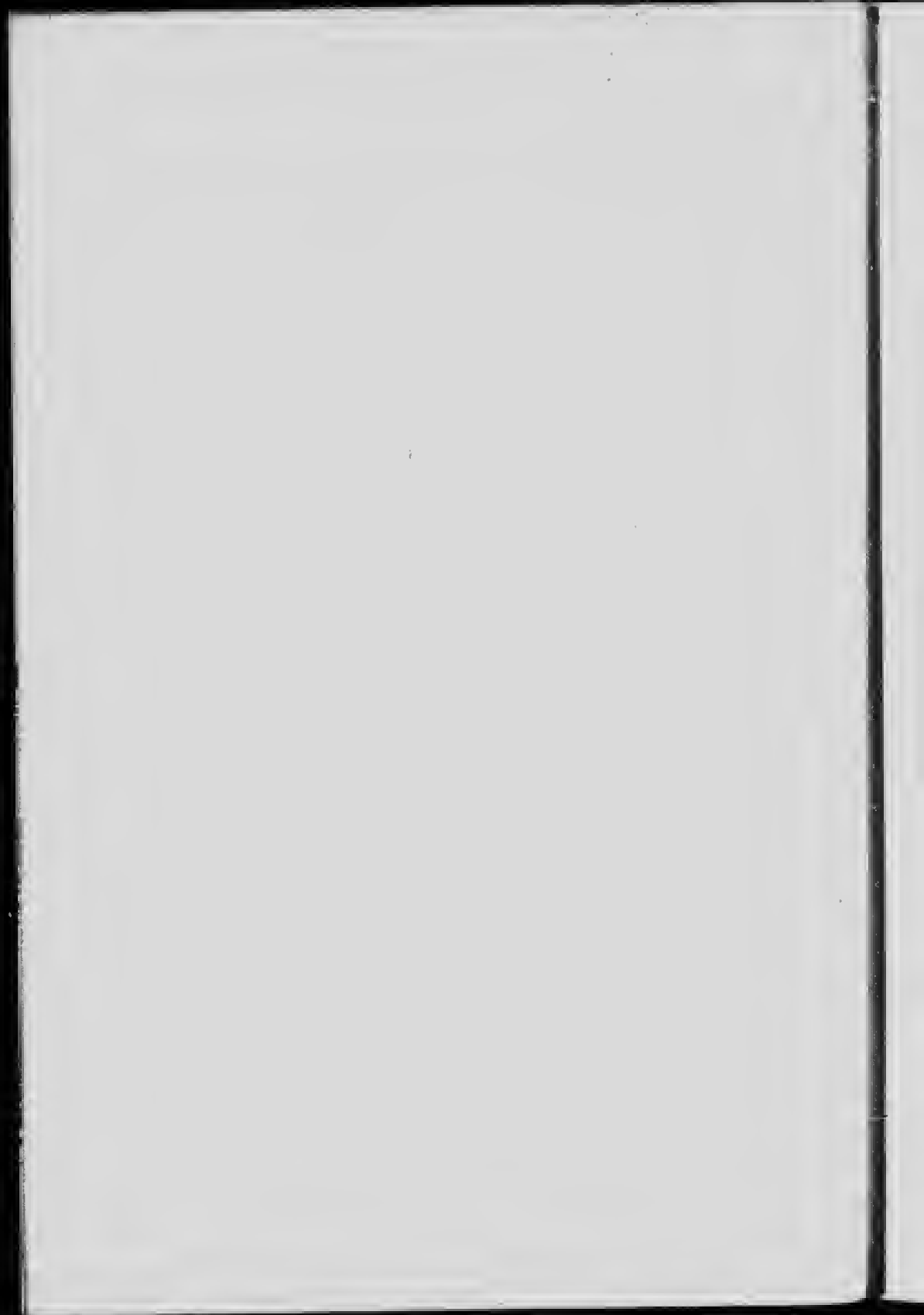








OLD CLINKERS







"We can't fool here," he cried. "We got to get around to them gas-tanks"

See page 114

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OLD CLINKERS

A STORY OF THE NEW
YORK FIRE DEPARTMENT

BY

HARVEY J O'HIGGINS

AUTHOR OF "THE SMOKE EATERS," "DON-A-DREAMS," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
MARTIN JUSTICE

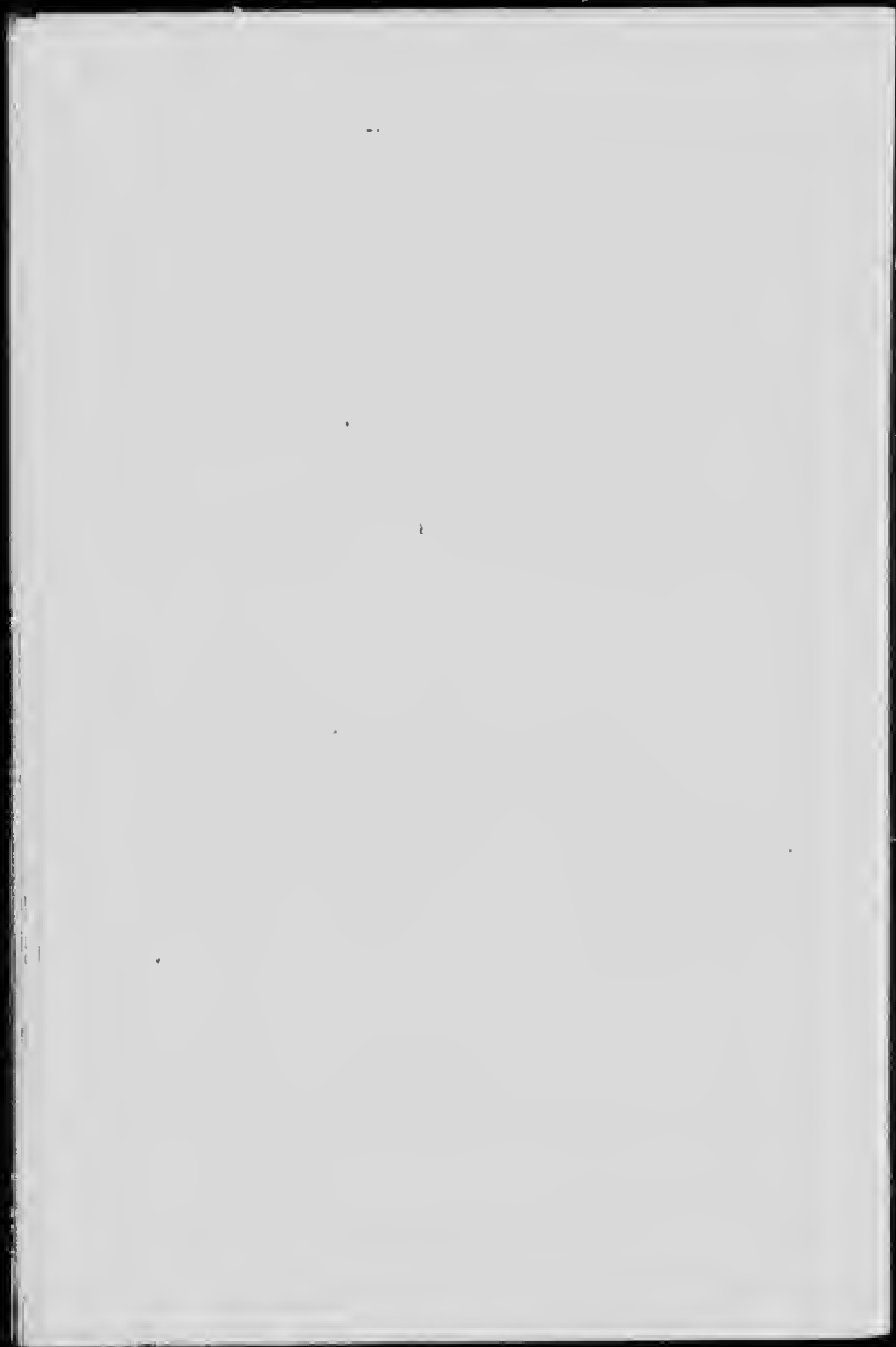
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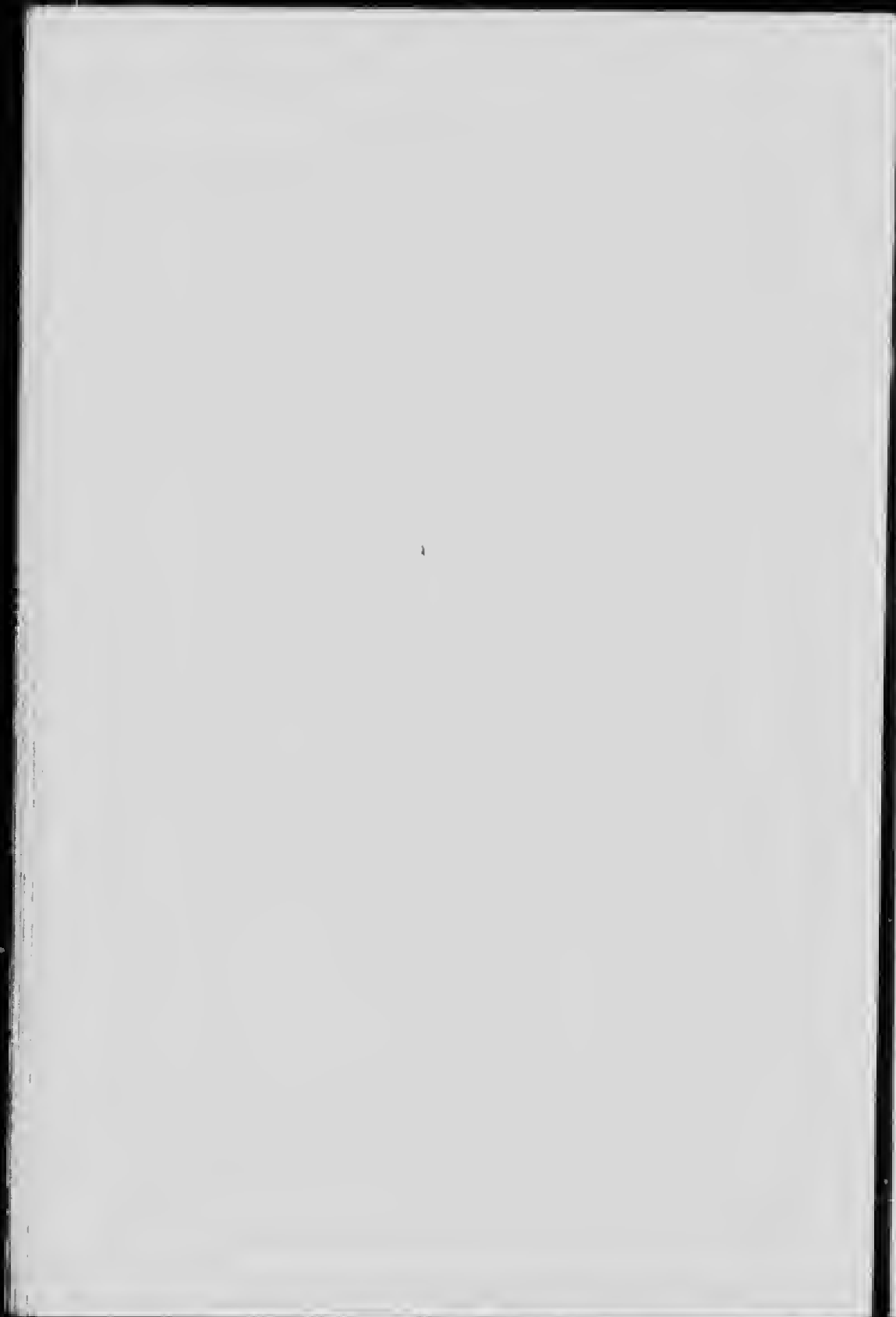
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TO THE FORGOTTEN HEROES
OF THE F. D. N. Y.



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"The fire flames up to a reddening sky;
On God and the firemen the people cry!
The fire's put out, and everything's righted;
God's forgot and the firemen slighted."

— *Fireman's Annual.*



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I

THE *Sachsen* was a freighter of the Baltic-American line, plying between New York and Hamburg; she was tied to her pier in the North River, receiving cargo, that afternoon, when fire was discovered among the bales of cotton that were being loaded into her forward hold; and according to the foreman of her forward-hold gang of freight-handlers, the fire started in a longshoreman's clay pipe, smoked, against orders, while the man was at his work below decks receiving the bales. According to the officials of the Baltic-

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American line, the fire was "a pure case of spontaneous combustion;" and the newspapers of the day reported it as such. But when New York's new fire-boat, the *Hudson*, in answer to the alarm from the pier, came whistling up the river from her berth near the Battery and turned in under the starboard quarter of the big *Sachsen*, Captain Keighley of the *Hudson* looked up to see a longshoreman scowling down at him over the steamship's bulwarks; and the presence of that particular longshoreman was at the moment as ominous of trouble for old Keighley as it subsequently became significant to him in considering the origin of the fire.

For the man was an ex-fireman, of the name of Doherty, whom Captain Keighley had helped to dismiss from the service of the fire-department one

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week before. The reasons for his dismissal need not concern us here. The important point is that he had been a "Jigger-jumper," as the members of a certain "benevolent association" of the firemen had been nicknamed; and Captain Keighley's crew was full of "Jiggers" who were eager to avenge their fellow "Jigger" for the loss of his uniform.

Captain Keighley, when he looked up to see Doherty above him, was standing on the cement roof of the *Hudson's* wheelhouse, beside a monitor nozzle that could drive a hole through a brick wall with a stream as stiff as a steel bar; and the fact that he stood in this place of command by virtue of his own cunning, in spite of intrigue in the fire-department and treachery in his own crew, did not show in the look that he lifted to his

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enemy overhead. At most he showed only a cool reliance on the streams of the *Hudson* to cope with any mischief that might be in hand; for the *Hudson* had a battery of four sets of duplex pumps that could force out of her pipes as much water in a minute as twenty shore-engines in a row; and Keighley was eager for a big fire to test her powers on.

The pilot in the wheelhouse brought her sweeping into the narrow slip beside the *Sachsen*, riding the ridges of her own swell—her keel all but naked amidships—and reversed with a suddenness that shook her to the stack. From the deck of the *Sachsen* men were bawling down: “Cotton in the forrud hold! Cotton afire! Cotton afire!” Captain Keighley struck at the whistle rope and blew for tugboats. “Moore,”

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he called to his lieutenant, "get a lighter alongside here and wet down the cotton I hoist out. Couple up two lines. Get the cotton spray."

In handling such cotton fires, it is the way of the expert to extinguish the worst of the flames in the hold and then to hook out the smoldering bales, hoist them to the open air, lower them to the deck of a lighter and play the hose on them there until they are drenched. To that end, Keighley divided his crew into two squads, one of which he ordered to remain on the *Hudson*, with Lieutenant Moore, to receive the smoking bales as they came from the *Sachsen*, and the other he ordered to ascend the high side of the *Sachsen*, on their scaling ladders with two lines of hose, to attack the flames in the freighter's hold. But in picking the men for these separate

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squads, Keighley was careful to gather into one of them all the members of his crew whom he knew to be "Jiggers," and this squad he himself led up the scaling ladders to the deck of the *Sachsen*; the other men, who were not "Jiggers," he left on the *Hudson* in charge of Lieutenant Moore, who was the "financial secretary" of the association and the leader of the conspiracy against Keighley in the company. By so doing, Keighley aimed, of course, to keep all the disaffected men under his own eye and to leave Moore behind with the loyal men where he could do no harm.

Lieutenant Moore understood these tactics and smiled to himself sourly. There was another man who smiled—but with a more triumphant expression of malice; and that was the ex-fireman Doherty, who had been scowling

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at Captain Keighley over the rail. And Keighley had not been more than ten minutes in the hold of the *Sachsen* when another blaze—independently, unexpectedly, and from no known cause whatever—burst out among the bales of cotton that were waiting to be loaded, in the pierhouse, whither Doherty had retreated.

The pierhouse was a wooden structure—though it was covered on the outside with a corrugated sheet-iron. Its beams were sifted over with the fine dust of innumerable cargoes; and its whole length was unprotected by a single hose hydrant or fire extinguisher. The result was a spread of flames so sudden that before the freight handlers had ceased running and shouting for buckets, the fire had leaped to the timbers of the shed and begun to sing there

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busily; and Doherty, still smiling to himself, only escaped from the burning end of the wharf by jumping into the slip.

At first, Lieutenant Moore did not see his opportunity; he remained stubbornly aboard the *Hudson* waiting for further orders. But when the shouts on the burning pier drew him to the deck of the *Sachsen*, he found that Captain Keighley and his men were still deep in the *Sachsen's* hold with the steamship's crew; and then he understood, foresaw, and made ready.

"Damn fine management," he grumbled, "to go down there and leave a blaze like this behind him! Get another line up here!"

The men obeyed with alacrity, but by the time they got water through their hose, they had only a squirt-gun stream

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to use against the fire that was developing inside the pierhouse's corrugated sheet-iron shell. They could not see the extent of that fire; and Lieutenant Moore, grumbling and complaining, did not appreciate the fact that in the flames which began to strike out from the windows of the pierhouse through the smoke, there was more than the disgrace of Captain Keighley for blundering in his conduct of the attack.

"Hell of a captain!" he cried. "If it wasn't for the shore companies now, this end of the water-front 'd get *good* and singed!"

The sparks began to blow over on the *Sachsen* from the pier, and Moore ran back to order up another line of hose from the *Hudson*. He called to the men on the fire-boat to train a stream from the monitor nozzle, over

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the deck of the *Sachsen*, to the roof of the pier building; and he was promptly obeyed; but the stream was so strong that when it was raised to clear the bulwarks of the *Sachsen* it shot over the pier, and there was nothing to be done but to train it still higher, to let the water drop on the buildings, sprinkling them instead of tearing them to pieces. Fire caught the awnings of the *Sachsen*; the firemen drenched them. A puff of blaze reached her house-work; they fought it off. Moore ordered here, cursed and complained there, and ran around futilely; and, at last, realizing with what a fire he was at such close quarters, he cried out frantically. So cast off the hawsers and tow the *Sachsen* to midstream.

There was no one left to cast off. The firemen had to get their axes from

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the *Hudson* and chop through the wire ropes. The steel strands resisted long enough to complete the disaster, and when the last thread parted under the axebledges, the current still held the *Sachsen* hard against the wharf.

A stewardess ran out from the cabins, screaming that the after house-work was afire.

The whole catastrophe had developed so quickly that the thought uppermost in Lieutenant Moore's mind was still his first one of Captain Keighley's disgrace; and when he lost his head and began to shout at the men—like an officer in the panic of a retreat—it was abuse of Captain Keighley that he shouted.

“What the hell did he want to go down in the hold for, with a fire like this up here? He's a hell of a captain, *he* is! He's a hell of a captain!”

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One of the pipemen, (whose name was Farley), without turning his head, growled under his helmet, "Why didn't yuh haul her out o' here long ago?"

"Why don't she come out now?" Moore cried. "That's why I didn't. Because she *won't!* That's why! Because she *can't!*"

The tugs, whistling and panting around her, got their lines on the after bitts and pulled and shouldered and struggled noisily. But by the time they got her under way, the crew of the *Sachsen*, alarmed by the screams of the stewardess, were already diving overboard, and Lieutenant Moore's men were retiring from a blaze that seemed to spit back their streams on them in spurts of steam.

Moore ordered Farley to go below decks and warn Captain Keighley and

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the squad in the hold. Farley glanced at his fellows; they were all partisans of the captain; they had been chafing under Moore's attacks on him, and they were contemptuous of the lieutenant for the way in which he had mishandled the pierhouse blaze. Moreover, there were only four of them to two lines of hose; and the one unnecessary man there, as they saw the situation, was Moore. Let him go himself.

The lieutenant repeated his orders. Farley sulkily remained where he was. And—what with "Jiggers" and "Anti-Jiggers," the influence of the fire commissioner who was a "Jigger" and the influence of the chief who was not, the party of Captain Keighley and the followers of Lieutenant Moore—discipline on the *Hudson* had come to such a pass that Moore had no redress against a sub-

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ordinate who refused to obey his orders.

"All right," he threatened. "I'll see to *you*, too!" and turned to run for the hatch.

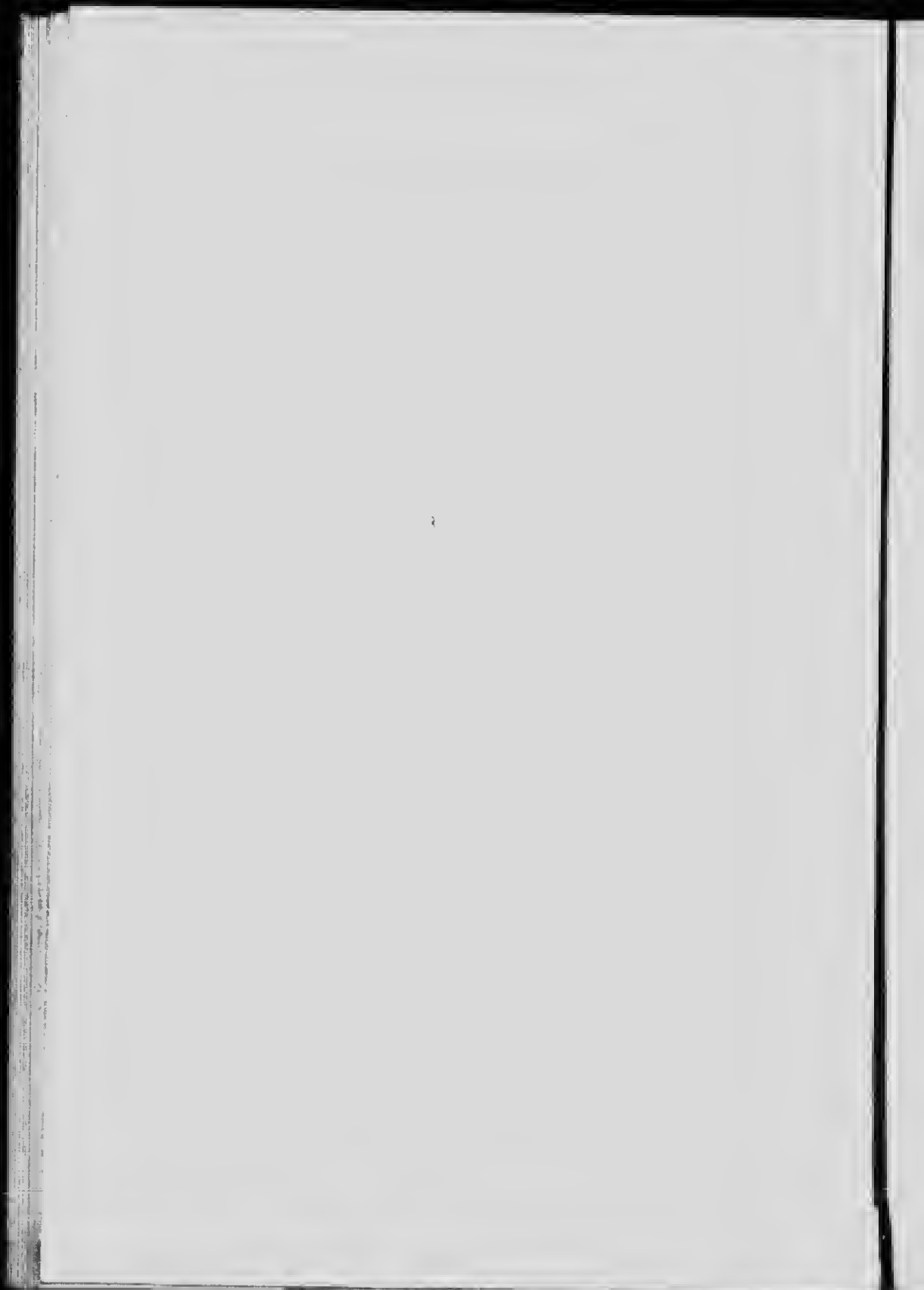
The men grinned. The *Hudson*, trying to bring its monitor to bear on the burning woodwork of the *Sachsen*, shot a terrific stream, roaring and threshing, close to their heads. Farley said: "That darn fool 'll be sweepin' us off here in a minute. We'd better get inside out o' this an' help in *there*."

They retreated aft for shelter, dragging their hose; and by doing so they left the forward deck to the flames that were blown over the *Sachsen* by a steady breeze.



"All right," he threatened. "I'll see to you, too!"

See page 18



II

MEANWHILE, Lieutenant Moore had found Captain Keighley and the "Jiggers," with their two lines, working busily in the choke of cotton smoke in the deep hold, playing one pipe on the heart of the fire and with the other sprinkling the bales around it. And Captain Keighley, with his helmet awry on his head and a smile of contempt slanting his mouth, feeling the *Hudson's* eight pumps behind him, was playing a game with that fire, happily. The screeches of the stewardess and the flight of the ship's crew had not alarmed him. He was used to the sight of blind

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fright; he saw the flames before him confined and beaten back; and he knew that for any fire that might develop behind him, the *Hudson* was a park of cannon drawn up in reserve.

It did not occur to him that the *Hudson*, drawn up under the high side of the *Sachsen*, was a park of cannon in a hole in the ground.

Lieutenant Moore, explaining in the manner of a man with a grievance, took a valuable minute to make the situation plain. He made it plainer than he knew. Keighley narrowed his old eyes and nodded. "Back out, boys!" he called. "Leave yer lines. We'll pick 'em up from the deck."

The men dropped their hose and climbed up the ladders; and as soon as they had passed the orlop deck it was evident to them that they were in a trap.

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Flames were blowing across the hatch above them, as if the very air had suddenly become inflammable and taken fire from the fierce heat of the July sun. Captain Keighley led up the ladders until he was almost at the top—and then dropped down again. There was no escape by that way.

“We’ll have to go aft between decks,” he said.

An officer of the *Sachsen*, who had remained with the firemen fighting the fire, replied in broken English that this forward hold was shut off from the rest of the boat by two bulkheads and a cross-bunker.

Captain Keighley said, “Here! You know yer own boat. Take us out o’ here.”

The German shook his big, blond head, thought a moment, shook it again,

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and then made a pass with his hand and nodded.

He dropped down the ladder, and they followed him, choking, back to the deep hold. He groped his way aft in the smoke to the partition of steel plates that makes the after wall of the cargo room, and there he stopped. They heard him beating on the plates with the dull blows of a fat fist. One of the firemen passed him a bel⁺ hatchet. He rang it on the bulkhead.

There was no answer.

Captain Keighley seized it and rapped like a miner signalling for aid.

The German said resignedly, "T'ey haf gone."

But they had not gone. There was an answering tap from the other side of the metal; a bolt squeaked and grated; and then the bulkhead door

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swung back on the empty coal bunker and the faint glow of a furnace in the stoke hole.

Through this narrow opening the firemen crawled into an atmosphere that was cool by comparison with the one they had been breathing in the burning cargo room; and they drew long breaths of relief there, looking around the well of steel at the bottom of which they stood. The German officer took a little tin lamp—the shape of a miniature watering pot with a flame in the spout—and held it to give light to the two stokers, who were screwing the bolts of the door in place again; and one of the stokers looked back over his shoulder, surprised at this condescension. The officer said nothing until both doors were fast. Then he growled at the stokers gutturally—and on the word

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they dropped their tools and ran, with the whole party at their heels, between hot boilers, through dark furnace rooms, between more boilers, through the doors of other bulkheads, and finally into the grated galleries of the engine room, where they found two engineers still standing before their levers, waiting for further orders from the bridge.

Captain Keighley, thus far, had moved with a certain swift calmness, speaking in a low voice, and using his eyes, as he used his hands, deliberately, without any darting glances or quick turns. But when he looked up the railed ladders that rose from tier to tier of machinery in the engine room, he heard a sound above him that he had not expected; and he started up those ladders at the double quick.

The crackle of the fire grew louder as

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he climbed. He heard cries and shouting in the cabins. He smelt scorch again. A puff of heat swirled down on him in a fierce blast. And when he reached the sliding door that gave on the deck, the passageway was filled with smoke.

Here the four firemen who had refused to obey Lieutenant Moore and who were caught in the burning housework, came running down on their captain. "It's no go—that way—Cap'n," Farley cried.

Keighley grasped the greasy railing of the ladder and slid down on the "Jiggers" who had been following him up. "Get further aft!" he ordered.

They dropped into the engine room as lightly as they would have dropped down the sliding poles of their "house," and they called to the Ger-

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man officer to show them another stairway further aft. That officer did not need to be told what they had found above them. He jumped down among the dynamos, stumbled past the ice engine, dived through the open door of the shaft tunnel, and swinging himself to the ladder that went up the inside of a ventilator shaft, he led them up that narrow flue hand over hand.

They were not half way up it before they met what they had met above the engine room—a suffocating heat and smother. The firemen heard the German growling and coughing above them, as big and clumsy as a bear that is being smoked out of a hollow tree. Captain Keighley caught up to him and shouted to him go on. He answered nothing that was intelligible, and tried to back down. Keighley ordered him to hold

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fast, and went up over him like a cat.

The others waited, head to heels.

"Can't make it," they heard the captain call at last. "Back down, men! Back down!"

They went down without a word.

"We got to wait here till they get that blaze out," he said curtly. "She's afire up there from end to end. I've shut the ventilator cover to keep out the smoke. We'll be better down below here till they get some water on her."

They were in the shaft tunnel—a corridor of steel plates, seven feet high, five feet wide, and more than thirty feet long. From end to end of it, the big shaft that spins the starboard propeller lay shining like a steel python, stretched and bound in its bearings. At one end was the wall through which the shaft passed to the after peak and the

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screw; at the other was the entrance from the engine room, already blue with smoke; above them was the throat of the closed ventilator. They were in a metal vault, far below the surface of the river, with every avenue of escape cut off by the fire above them.

Captain Keighley leaned back against the shaft and took off his helmet.

The men stood waiting. They had depended on him to show them the way out of the danger into which he had led them. One of the "Jiggers"—it was "Shine" Conlin—demanded, "How are we goin' to get up?"

"Well," Keighley rounded on him, "I'm not keepin' yuh, am I? Get up any way yuh like!"

III

THE words were given like a challenge—a challenge to one of those trials of authority in which the trained leader, turning on his rebellious followers, seems to use the hand of chance and circumstance to whip them into line—a challenge that struck the men before him with a little start of surprise that passed over the group like a shudder.

They stared at him. Some of them were pale, with lips parted. One of the captain's own faction had an odd expression of hurt amazement and reproach. Another was frowning.

“Shine” said angrily, “*You* brought

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us down here. Why the hell don't yuh take us up?"

The captain smiled. He was clean-shaven, lean-cheeked, thin-lipped; and his smile was not sweet—for he knew that he had been beaten by the fire, and he knew that he could have been so beaten only because of the treachery of his lieutenant and the "Jiggers."

"Moore," he said, "take yer gang back to the *Hudson*. It's goin' to be cooler out there."

The lieutenant blinked at him. It was the first time that Keighley had openly shown his quiet understanding of the intrigues among the crew, and the change in his manner was a sufficient menace without the sarcastic implication of his words. What that implication was, Moore was trying not to let himself consider. Fires had been to

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him what battles are to the general who has political ambitions. That the issue of any one of them might endanger his career had been possible; that it might end his life had never seriously occurred to him. And the Adam's apple in his throat worked like a feed-pump gone dry as he swallowed and swallowed that fear.

The men looked at him; and it was evident that he was in no condition to think for them. They looked at the captain; and Keighley's hard eyes were glittering hostilely as they shifted down the line from face to face.

"I saw yer frien' Doherty on deck," he said. "I guess yer benev'lent association o' Jigger-jumpers had something to do with this bus'ness, eh?"

They did not answer.

"Well," he said, "I hope it's good fer

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it. It's goin' to be a heavy call on the treasurer—five o' yuh—in a bunch."

"Shine" turned with an oath and ran out to the engine room. The others broke and followed him. Keighley, alone with his lieutenant, regarded him grimly.

The old captain had been a fireman since the days when the Sunday fights between the volunteer hose companies in Philadelphia had been the "only mode of public worship on the Sabbath" there. When those fights had culminated in riot, bloodshed, and the burning of churches, he had come to New York, and run with the "goose-necks" and defied the "leather-heads" until the paid brigade was formed and he took service with it. He had been living among men and politicians ever since; and to the natural cunning of the



"It's going to be a heavy coll on the treasurer—five o' yuh—in a bunch"

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north of Ireland "sharp-nose" he had added a cynical experience that filled him to the full with the sort of wisdom that comes of such a life. Lieutenant Moore had been so simple to him that the "boy's" attempts to supplant him, with the aid of the Fire Commissioner and the "Jiggers," had amused him like a game. He looked at Moore, now, with a bitter contempt.

"You youngsters in the department," he said, "yuh're great politicians. But what yuh don't know about a fire's enough to keep yuh from tryin' to do tricks with one—er it ought to be."

Moore shook his head, dazedly.

"Yuh're goin' to get yer fingers burnt now. An' it serves yuh damn well right."

Moore turned away in silence and stumbled out to the engine room. Cap-

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tain Keighley, having watched him go, proceeded to examine the shaft tunnel at his leisure. He found nothing but a ball of cotton waste, which he stuffed into his pocket. Then he leaned back calmly and waited for his crew to return.

They were in the engine room, standing in the thickening smoke, waiting for nothing, with the quietness of disgusted despair. Sparks were beginning to fall down through the gratings. Little splashes of hot water sprinkled on them from above. They looked up at the reflection of the flames that were purring overhead, speaking in low voices to one another; and every now and then a man who had gone forward toward the stoke holes, or been down on his face crawling below the machinery, came back to them from a vain attempt to find a safer spot,

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and made the gesture of failure. A young German stoker was biting his lips and whining like a frightened dog.

The last slow pulse of the engines stopped; the electric lights died out, and the glare of the fire reddened the shining metal of columns, cylinders and piston rods. No one moved. They watched, as if fascinated, the approach of a burning horror that seemed to be fighting its way down to them through the bars of the gratings, snarling.

At last an engineer joined them with a lamp from the stoke hole, and, after consulting with the German officer, he led them all back to the dark shaft tunnel. He passed them through, and slid over the steel door until there was only a narrow aperture left unclosed. He squeezed himself through that slit, and then with hammer and cold-chisel drove

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the door home until the opening was merely a crack wide enough to admit the finger ends. The men plugged this crack with their coats. He put his lamp on top of a shaft-bearing.

It showed Captain Keighley still standing there.

“Don’t do that,” he said to one of the firemen who had begun to strip to the skin. “Yuh’ll want all yuh can get between yuh an’ the metal, as soon’s that after cargo gets goin’.”

The man grumbled, “We’ll be sittin’ on top of a redhot stove in a minute.”

Captain Keighley replied, “Yuh can go outside an’ sit *in* one, if yuh want to.”

Lieutenant Moore took a quivering breath through dry nostrils and shut his teeth on the trembling of his jaws. He could hear a low murmur from the fire

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that was roaring above decks. The little lamp flared dully on the bearings. Beyond that, there was nothing but darkness and silence and the heat that choked.

“Well?” Captain Keighley challenged them.

No one replied.

“I guess yuh got what yuh been workin’ fer, ain’t yuh? Yuh got me into trouble. Yuh been tryin’ hard enough to push me into a hole ever since I broke Doherty.”

“Look here, sir,” a fireman named Cripps spoke up. “We’re all in this together. There’s no use jawin’.”

“That’s right,” another added plaintively.

Captain Keighley nodded. “If yuh’d been all together from the first, we wouldn’t be here, d’yuh see?”

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Several of the men answered, " 'Twasn't our fault." They looked at the lieutenant, who had dropp'd his head and was gazing, empty-eyed, at his feet.

"No?" Keighley asked suavely. "Well, it wasn't mine, was it?"

No one spoke again until Cripps asked weakly, "Can yuh get us out, sir?"

"Yes," he said. "Yes. If yuh live long enough, an' I do, I'll get y' *all* out. . . . I'll get out ev'ry man o' yuh that's breathin', any way. . . . We got to wait here till that fire burns down; that's all."

The young stoker had begun to sob. Lieutenant Moore opened his parched lips to speak, but his tongue, swollen and dry, like a piece of flannel in his mouth, was too thick to turn a word. The sound of flames rose suddenly to a muffled grumble.

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Captain Keighley said, "Here's some cotton waste I hunted up. Pull a wad off to plug yer noses, an' tie somethin' over yer mouths. We'll be breathin' scorch before we're through."

He tore off a ball of waste and passed the roll to Moore. It travelled down the line from hand to hand—as if for a sign of union and peace among them—like a "pax."

"Now," he ordered, "get away from the sides o' that cargo room, an' lay yerselves out 's flat 's yuh can."

The majority of the men obeyed him meekly.

"That's right," he said. "Stay there now. It's goin' to be so hot in here that some o' yuh'll be goin' off yer heads. Yuh don't want to do that. Yuh want to hang on, see? Keep still an' hang on. An' if yuh feel yerself goin' loose,

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get a hold o' the floor, anyway, an' don't let go."

He took up the engineer's hammer, stepped down to the door, and put his back against it. "I'll brain any man that tries to open this door before I give the word," he said.

They were a mixed lot—Keighley's crew—picked from all the battalions in the city to serve on the new *Hudson*. There was "Shine" Conlin, a blue-jowled Bowery type, who had been newsboy, boot-black, (whence the "Shine") wharf-rat, deck-hand, plug-ugly and leader of his gang; he had come into the department from the ranks of the "Con Scully Association" to earn a regular salary for the support of "th' ol' crow," his mother; and he was the most aggressive "Jigger" in the company. Even now, he did not obey

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Keighley's orders. Instead of lying down, he sat up against a shaft bearing; and instead of covering his mouth, he filled it with "fine-cut" from a package in his hip pocket and tried to chew it nonchalantly. His mouth was so dry that he felt as if he were trying to chew excelsior; it was tasteless. He turned it over and over in his jaw, until it was pulverized, like chaff. Then he blew it out, with an oath.

At his feet lay a huge truck driver named Nicholas Sturton and nicknamed "The Tur'ble Turk." He was of the captain's faction, because he was by nature loyal to appointed authority and solemnly conscientious in the fulfilment of all his duties. He had tied the red rags of a bandana handkerchief over his mouth and plugged his hairy nostrils with the cotton waste; and his

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eyes stared and his great chest heaved in his efforts to breathe through his gag. When he looked at Keighley, it was with the mute and patient appeal of a big boy, in pain, looking at the doctor who is watching over his suffering.

Lieutenant Moore, like "Shine," was sitting, but with his head in his hands, the cotton waste forgotten in them, his mouth fallen open. He had had a good education in the public schools; he was cursed with the imagination of the trained mind; and he suffered all the horrors of death every time he gasped. He was ready to weep with pity for himself, but his tears dried up before they reached his scorched eyelids. He was the pride of his parents, and the dominant note of his self pity was a sympathy for them in their disappointment in his end. "A hell of a finish,"

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he was saying to himself. "Here's a hell of a finish."

Cripps, a sly youth, freckled and sandy, had lain down carefully on his side, in silence, with the instinct of a trapped animal to "lie low" and wait. He had joined the "Jiggers" because the Fire Commissioner was of their party and he looked for promotion to come when the old chief, Borden, should be deposed and his successor named from the faction which the Commissioner favored. He refused to consider his present situation as more than a temporary interruption of his plans. He kept his mind off the thought of death, and busied himself trying to make his mouth "water" with the thought of cool lager beer in foaming schooners. He even achieved a secret smile.

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The other men lay quiet—some flat on their backs, staring glassily at the steel beams overhead; some panting with convulsive chests as the heat increased; some on their faces with their heads on their arms, gagged and stifling; some drawn up in strained and twisted attitudes, as if in pain. In their swollen eyeballs sudden lights darted and burst. Above the noise of the blood in their ears, they heard a sound of moaning. A choked voice began to struggle in the first wanderings of delirium.

“Steady, there! Steady!” Captain Keighley called out. He was standing up, his arms crossed, his face drenched with perspiration—in absolute and unquestioned command at last.

He was still standing there when the lamp burned low, flickered and went out.

The darkness was soon unbearable

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with heat; and Keighley put down his hammer and began to strip himself to his underclothes and rubber boots. He could hear the men tearing at their woolen underwear as they ripped it off. Someone was singing a German ballad in a shrill nasal whine.

Suddenly there was an outbreak of oaths. "Shine" had begun to curse. Having arrived at an insane notion that Keighley had penned them all in there, he was promising himself an indescribable revenge if he ever escaped. He kicked out at Cripps—who had torn the bandage from his mouth to get more imaginary beer, and was gurgling to himself over it—and that started a confusion of crazy voices and weak complaints. A man crawled over Sturton and screamed when "Turk" seized him by the throat, struggling, with an up-

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roar that set all bedlam loose. The men began to fight, clutching at one another, rolling about with feeble blows, writhing like eels baked alive in an oven, like the lost souls in old pictures of hell. "Shine" leaped on Keighley and went down under a blow that almost split his forehead. The place was a pandemonium—awful—indescribable. . . .

Fifteen minutes later the silence of exhaustion had settled down on hoarse breathings and low groans. And Captain Keighley, sitting with his back to the door—his knees drawn up, his head resting on them, nauseated—was struggling against a whirling lapse of consciousness.

IV

THE fire on the *Sachsen* had been discovered when the freight-handlers returned to work after their midday meal. All that afternoon the boat burned and drifted; and by nightfall she was beached, on the Jersey mud-flats, with her paint peeled off her sides, her funnels blackened, her upper works a skeleton of blistered metal, lying, grey and hot, like a smoking fire-log, and steaming where the streams from the tugs and fire-boats struck her.

The *Hudson* had followed her, with Deputy-Chief Moran in charge, the remnants of Keighley's crew working desperately to drown out the fire. They had given up all hope of saving Keighley

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and the men who were with him, but they did not give up the appearance or the efforts of hope, although there had not been a sound or a sight of life on the *Sachsen* for eight hours, now, and she was slowly settling with the tons of water that were being poured into her cargo holds.

"It's no use," Moran said, with the coming of darkness—and relinquished even the pretence of the possibility of a rescue.

He went to shelter himself, behind the *Hudson's* wheel-house, from the radiated heat of the smoldering hulk, his mind busy with the affairs of the department. He heard a noise of hammering that seemed to come from the *Sachsen*, and he thought it was the sound of a pump set going by some crazy accident of the fire. At a shout from a fireman

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on the other side of the *Hudson*, he came out again to the bows wearily.

"I saw a light," the man cried. "There!"

The spark of a lantern was swinging from side to side on the *Sachsen* high up, amidships.

They howled, "Hi! Hi! Hullo! All right! All right, boys! Hol' on!"

"Turn the spray on the deck here," Moran ordered. "Half speed ahead. There's someone alive on her. . . . Good God!"

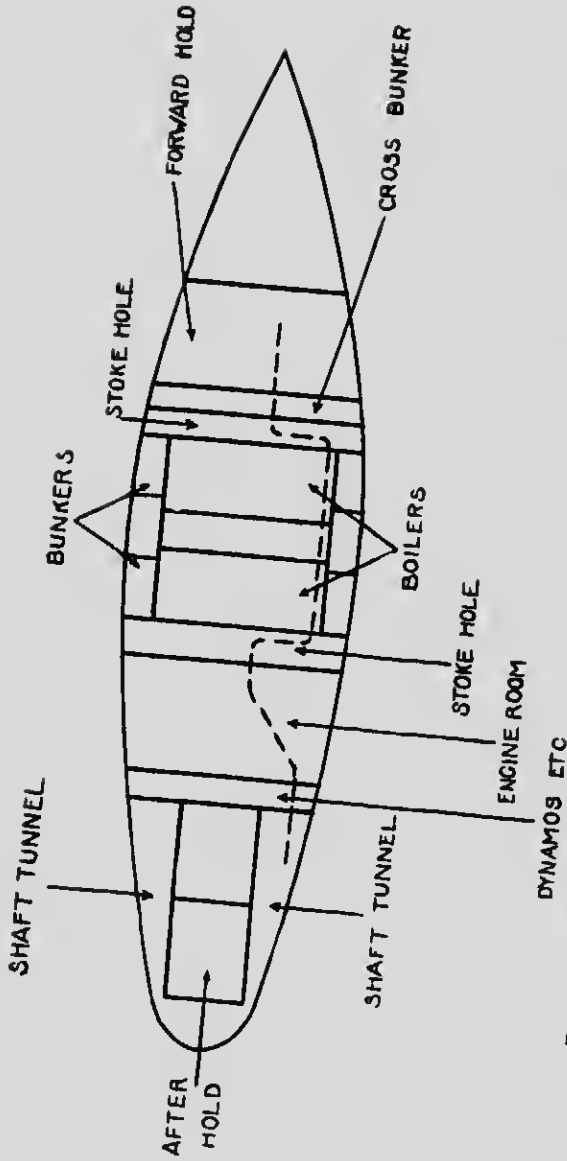
The heat, as the *Hudson* crept in, dried their eyes till they were half blinded by a blur of tears. Seen through these, the light swung big in the darkness. "Who is it? Who is it?" they called.

A weak hail answered them. The dripping fender of hemp on the nose of

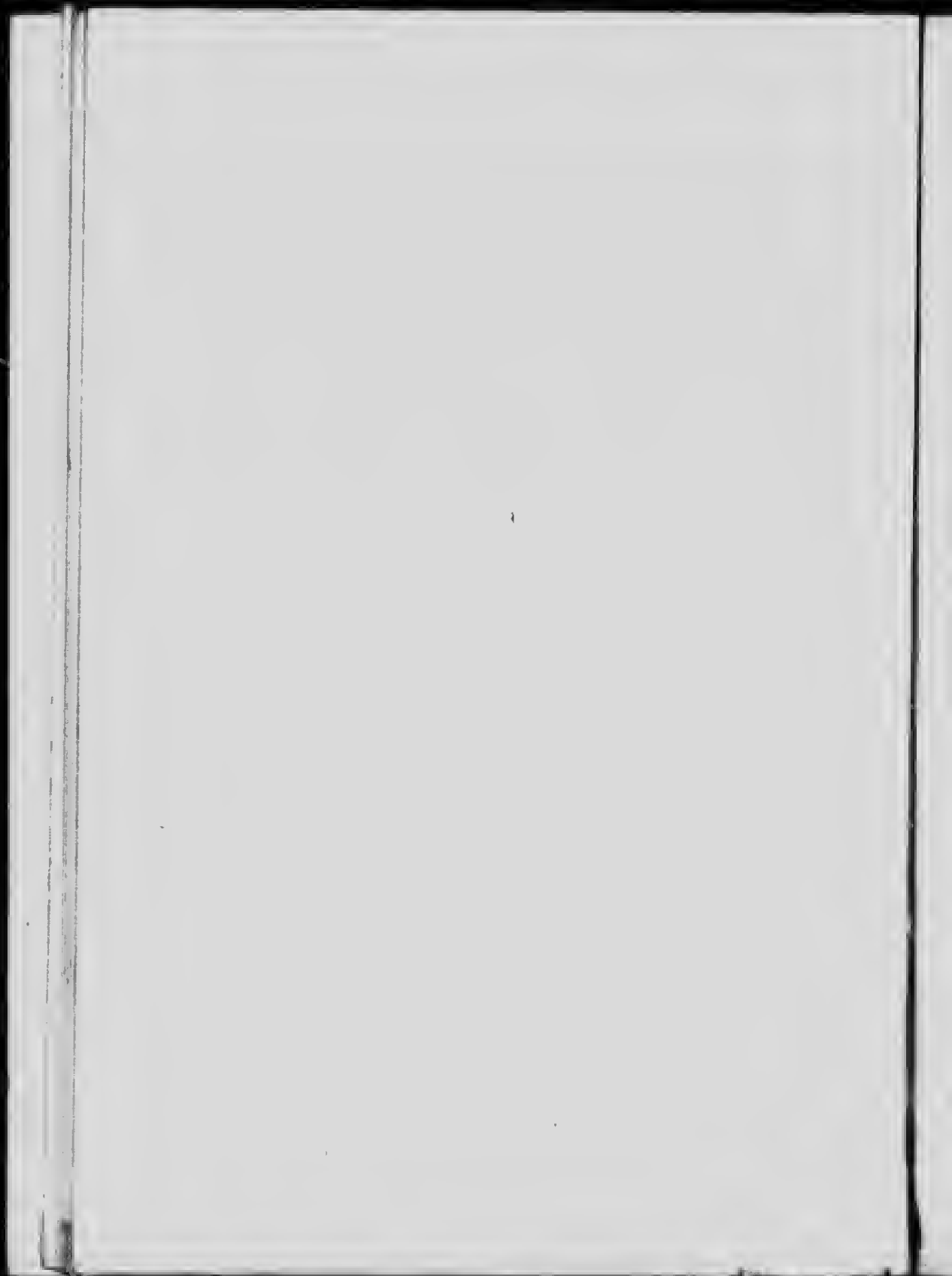
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the *Hudson* touched the side of the *Sachsen* and steamed on the hot metal. Erect in the bows, drenched with the spray of the hose, Moran cried in a voice of suffocation, "Jump!"

From the coal port above him a naked figure squirmed out, hung kicking and fell into his arms. Another and another followed—Moran and his men catching them as they came, and shouting encouragement through the steam that rose on all sides with the smell of blistered paint. One man in the struggle at the narrow opening, was thrown into the water and had to be dragged out with a boat hook. Others fell on their feet, and, throwing themselves on the deck with hoarse cries, began to roll around in the spray. Lieutenant Moore came down unconscious, as if baked stiff, and lay crouched. Captain Keighley,



*Dotted line shows passage of Keighley's men from forward cargo room to shaft tunnel
They finally escaped through bunkers amidships beside the boilers and stoke holes*



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falling beside him, crawled with his mouth open, to the nozzle of the spray. "All off!" he gasped. "Start—yer water. . . . *Water!*"

Moran shouted, "Back off. Full speed. Get these men to the hospital."

They were madmen. And the squad on the *Hudson*, fighting with them to prevent them from jumping overboard, had to carry them below to the engineer's quarters and wrap them in wet blankets and hold them down.

Not one of them was in a condition to tell how they had escaped. (Indeed few of them ever succeeded in recalling any more of what had happened in the shaft tunnel than a convalescent remembers of the delirium of his fever.) Only Keighley—between the gulps of water that were doled out to him cautiously—explained that he had come to

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his senses sitting with his back against the door of the shaft tunnel, ankle deep in water, and had realized that they would all be drowned in the tunnel unless they escaped to some higher level. He had forced the steel door back and driven or dragged the men out to the engine room where they climbed to the first tier of gratings, the fire in this part of the boat having burned itself out first, for want of fuel. From there, he had found his way through the stokeholes to an empty coal bunker, where a cooler current of air warned him that there was probably a coal port open up above him. He had come back for the others; they had climbed the bunker ladders, and found the port; an engineer had made the signal with a stoker's lamp; and the *Hudson* had seen it.

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"Gi' me a drink," Keighley ended.

"Gi' me a drink."

He was the least exhausted of all the crew—although the truth is that none of them was more than dangerously blistered and temporarily maddened by pain. They were of the toughness that is characteristic of their profession—chosen men who got themselves injured by the hundreds every year, but who succumbed to their injuries so rarely that the death rate of the department was, at that time, only six men a year—trained men who had the agility of cats and a cat's tenacity of life.

They were taken to their homes or to the hospitals, in ambulances, "to lay up for repairs." Captain Keighley refused to do even that. "I'm all right," he told the ambulance surgeons. "Put

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some grease on me—somethin' to take the smart out. If I go home lookin' sick, I'll scare the girl to death." (He was a widower, living with a married daughter whose husband was a police captain.) "Fix up my hands. That's all I need."

He had been burned about the head and arms chiefly, and they washed and bandaged him. They put his left arm in a sling—much to his disgust—and would have bound up his right hand, too, if he had not refused to allow them. "Let that alone," he ordered. "I got use for that." They warned him that he might have blood poisoning if he did not protect his burns from the air. "Huh!" he grunted. "Blood poisonin'! Put somethin' on it so's I can get a night's sleep. That's all I need." And they had to let him have his way.

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He went upstairs to his bedroom and lay down in his underclothes—because it would have been too great an effort to remove them—and slept the sleep of exhaustion. He was not disturbed; the *Hudson* had been reported out of commission and no alarms were rung in.

He slept the sleep of exhaustion, and he wakened next morning to the noises made by an improvised crew at work cleaning up the fireboat. When he had blinked away the first alarming idea that he had overslept, he sat up painfully and looked at the blisters on his free hand. He looked at them a long time—as if he saw there the whole story of his battle with the “Jiggers”—and then he looked up, under his eyebrows, at the open door and the vacant cots of the crew’s bunk-room, and he almost smiled. He straightened up slowly, like a rheumatic,

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as he stood; and he went about his toilet with a cripple's patience, his mind on the "Jiggers" and their discomfiture—considering what they would do next.

V

WHEN he came down stairs to the "office," he found Deputy-Chief Moran waiting to see him, and he received Moran as if nothing unusual had been happening, despite the fact that his left arm was still in its support. Moran had a morning newspaper on the desk, spread at a page that held a portrait of Captain Keighley and an account of the fire on the *Sachsen*. He greeted Keighley with congratulations, as pugilists shake hands before they come to blows.

Keighley glanced at the paper, indifferently. "We didn't stay in the engine room," he corrected the account. "We were in the shaft tunnel."

Moran was full-blooded and dark-

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haired. His mouth was harsh under a wiry black mustache that looked as if it had been bitten off at the teeth. He asked, curtly, "How did you get into that mess?"

Keighley dropped the paper in the waste basket before he replied, "I didn't get into it. I got out of it." He confronted Moran with a defiant eye. "There was some funny work at the bottom of it. The men in the tunnel seemed to think it was Moore an' his gang."

Moore's gang, of course, was also Moran's. And Moran demanded, "Did they say so?"

"No."

"Then what do *you* say so for?"

"Yuh *asked* me, didn't yuh?" Keighley replied, unperturbed.

"I asked you for facts!"

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“Well, that’s what yuh’re goin’ to get —if yuh want to hear them. Those men know. *They can tell.* I’m not in-t’rested—unless someone wants to make trouble fer me.”

“*Who* wants to make trouble for you?” Moran blustered.

Keighley replied, with meaning, “That’s what I’m waitin’ to find out.”

The Deputy-Chief had come there intending to hold over Keighley the threat of an investigation. He found, now, that Keighley had the butt end of that whip in his hand. He said roughly, “Look here, Keighley, you might as well understand first as last, the order for Chief Borden’s retirement ’s coming. You know which side your bread’s buttered on, don’t you?”

Without an instant’s hesitation, Keighley put his hand down flat on his

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desk-top and answered, "I stand pat. I don't owe *youse* nothin'. Yuh can do what yuh like, but yuh can't scare me. See?"

He knew that he was safe for the time, for he had the prestige of the morning's newspaper notoriety behind him, and the Commissioner would not dare to remove him without cause, and any attempt to make a case against him out of the fire on the *Sachsen* would prove—in the language of politics—"a boomerang." The charges against Chief Borden had been held proven by the Commissioner, but they had yet to be defended before a court of appeal under the Civil Service laws. Public sentiment had been aroused in the chief's favor by the arbitrary and insolent conduct of the Commissioner sitting in judgment at the trial. And Keighley

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calculated that if the order were issued for the chief's retirement, the "Jiggers," to obtain that order, would have to fling themselves into a blow that would take, for the moment, all their strength.

Moran took up his cap from the desk and put it on. "All right, Keighley," he said. "We'll see what we can do for you."

Keighley turned his back to reach his coat that hung on a hook beside the window. When he looked around, Moran had gone. He resumed possession of his office with a frowning glance about him, and then went out to the pier to inspect the work that had been done on the *Hudson*.

The quarrel in the fire-department was less political than personal; for, of course, both "Jiggers" and "Anti-Jig-

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gers" were adherents of Tammany Hall. It was a quarrel between the old chief, Borden, and the new Fire Commissioner, who was in some degree indebted to the "Jiggers" for his appointment; they had used their "voice and influence" for him with "the Boss"; Chief Borden had objected to their doing so, and had used his position to make life uneasy for their leaders, among whom was Deputy-Chief Moran. The quarrel had passed down from the officers to the men; Captain Keighley had undertaken to stop it in his company by preferring charges against the malcontent Doherty and having him "broken" by the chief; and this unexpected action had uncovered a whole conspiracy against him with Lieutenant Moore at its head.

Now, if Chief Borden were retired by

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order of the Commissioner, Keighley would be left without a friend in power; Moran would be made chief; and the full revenge of Keighley's enemies would fall upon him. He had no hope of avoiding it. He had no intention of trying to conciliate it. He was resolved merely to fight—after the manner of his kind—and to attend to his duties on the *Hudson* as thoroughly as possible, meanwhile, so that there might be no valid excuse for removing him from his command.

It was in this spirit that he received his men as they returned one by one to their work—and relieved the strangers who had been detailed in their places while they were in the hospital—and settled down again to pierhouse routine. "Shine" Conlin was the first to reappear, and he reported to the captain with

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a sort of hangdog shamefacedness; but Keighley—old, cold and silent—showed no sign of remembering the part the little wharf-rat had played aboard the *Sachsen*, and “Shine” resumed possession of his locker and his bunk, with the abashed grin of a guilty schoolboy who is allowed to return to his place in his class under suspended sentence. Sturton—“The Turr’ble Turk”—came eagerly, having a clear conscience; and he was a little crestfallen after his reception; whereas the sly and sandy Cripps accepted the captain’s manner as a tribute to his own powers of concealment and winked to himself in secret self-congratulation as he came out of the office, his eyes on his feet. The loyal Farley looked blank. The others behaved according to their natures and

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their degrees of innocence or guilt. Only Lieutenant Moore—the last to arrive, very pale and shaken—received any intimation that Keighley had not forgotten what had occurred; and he received it in the captain's refusal to allow him to write the company's reports, as he had been accustomed.

Life in the pierhouse, between fires, was as dull as imprisonment. There were brasses to be polished, hose to be dried, and a watch to be kept on the "jigger"—the little bell that rang in the alarms; but when the chores for the day had been done, all the rest was idleness. As long as there were strangers in the company, there was some show of sociability in the sitting-room, but when the entire crew had returned to duty, whether they worked or idled, it was in

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a constrained silence, with side-mouthed whispers and a suspicious aloofness between group and group.

There was little said about the fire on the *Sachsen* even within the groups. Firemen have no more taste for discussing their day's work with one another than any other laborers have; and in this case, there was an uneasy feeling that the man who said least, now, would have least to answer for if there were to be an official investigation of the disaster. As for Keighley, he did not ask himself—or anybody else—what was going on in the minds of either faction. He did not ask, from either, anything but obedience; and he got that, now, without perceptible difficulty. They had evidently acquired some sort of unholy respect for him; and if they were plotting against him, they were doing

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it hypocritically. He was satisfied, if it had not been for the difficulty of making out the daily reports.

It was as if to make that difficulty greater that the engineer of the *Hudson* came to him to complain of the trouble it was to keep the boat's low-pressure cylinder warm and ready to start. "I can't see the sense o' puttin' triple-expansion engines into a fire-boat, any way," he reported. "That third cylinder's just a drag on the other two. She goes cold here, layin' in the dock, an' we're half way to a fire before she gets hot enough to handle the steam."

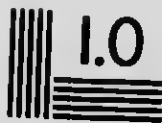
Keighley replied, "Well, send in yer kick to headquarters"—and avoided Dady's eye as he said it; for it was the captain's duty to make all such reports.

The engineer looked at him, looked at the floor, and then rubbed his nose with



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the back of an oily hand. "I guess *you* better do it, cap'n," he said meekly. "I ain't much of an ink-slinger." And Keighley's greater sense of dignity compelled him to answer, with an affected indifference, "All right. All right."

But when he shut the door of his office and took out his pocket Webster from the locked drawer in which he kept it—with as much secrecy as if it were a rhyming dictionary—he sat down before his official letter paper to nurse his jaw with no more dignity than a school-boy. He began to screw out the tortuous scrawl of his report, breathing hard at the end of every line and muttering curses at the beginning of the next; and when he decided that he had come to the end of his first sentence, he put down his pen to relax the muscles of his mouth and wipe his forehead and swear angrily

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at Moore for having failed him. The *Hudson* cuddling up against the pier, purring a little fume of steam from the exhaust pipe, was roused from her rest every now and then by the engineer in charge turning over the engines to get the water out of the low-pressure cylinder. And in the sitting-room Lieutenant Moore was tilted back against the wall in a cane chair, reading a newspaper, looking over his sheet at the closed door of the office with an expression of sulky resentment, and with the same expression glancing aside at the men who were reading, loafing and playing dominoes around him.

There was nothing of the genial atmosphere of an engine house's leisure hour about the scene.

"Shine" had confided, in a husky undertone, to the freckled Cripps be-

OLD CLINKERS

side him, "I s'pose Moore's sore 'cause we won't fight it out to a finish fer 'm. What'd *we* make by it, supposin' we got th' ol' man trun out of his job, eh?"

Cripps shut his eyes and nodded solemnly. He was still "lying low."

At a round table in the center of the room, Farley, of the curled mustache, was playing dominoes with Sturton, "The Turr'ble Turk;" and Farley, being an expert, could loll back in his chair and play absent-mindedly; while Sturton, to whom the game was an almost violent mental exercise, bent over his dominoes, with his big-boned face set in a worried scowl, playing deliberately, with slow movements of his hairy paws.

Farley had been watching Lieutenant Moore. "That loct'nt looks like a bull-pup shut out on a door-step," he summed it up to Sturton. But "Turk"

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merely grunted, without letting his attention be drawn from the game; and they continued to play in silence—waiting, as the whole department was waiting, for the retirement of Chief Borden and its consequences.

VI

THEY were waiting so, one night, when the next rear-front blaze came to relieve the monotony of their inaction. At the first stroke of the jigger Keighley laid down his pen and brightened with the hope that there was a fire in his district to release him from his desk. Lieutenant Moore dropped his newspaper and looked up to count the strokes of the bell with an expression of relief. The men straightened back from their dominoes; and when the little bell started to ring the third number of a station in their district, they rose with a smile. With the first stroke of the larger gong, the sitting-room was empty—Captain Keighley

OLD CLINKERS

was shouting to the pilot, "All right there! Pier ——, North River!"—and the *Hudson* was under way.

They found the river as erowded with a summer evening's traffic as Broadway with street-cars and hansoms on a theatre night; and the *Hudson* had no shore engine's right of way under the law. She went whistling up the stream, dodging and spurting, throbbing, grunting and checking specd. Blazing excursion boats, bedecked with colored lights, answered her impatient signals with cheerful impudence and held their courses. Squat ferries paddled serenely aecross her path. A tug cut in ahead of her to race with her for salvage, and worried her like a cur at a horse's head. The pilot twirled his wheel, worked his engine room signals, and swore despairingly. And Captain Keighley, staring

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at the shore lights in the distance, re-
volved the first sentence of his report
in memory, and vainly tried to forget
it.

When the river opened into a free
stretch of water, the tug fell behind;
and Keighley saw the pier-end lamp—
towards which they were heading—
blinking like the intermittent flash of
a lighthouse. It disappeared, and he
guessed that it had been blotted out by
the drift of smoke.

“Wind from the south?” he asked.
The pilot answered, “Yes’r.” Keigh-
ley said, “Take us in on this side o’ the
pier.”

He stepped out of the wheel-house to
go aft to the crew. “Get out two two-
inch lines from the port gates,” he
ordered Lieutenant Moore.

“Shine” came running back from the

OLD CLINKERS

bows and joined the men who were taking the hose from its metal-sheathed box. "Banana fritters fer ours," he said. "It's the fruit pier!" And Keighley observed that some of the men laughed, that the others at least smiled, and that Lieutenant Moore was the only one who remained out of reach of the invitation to good humor. The captain returned forward again, frowning thoughtfully.

The pier shed, as they swung in towards it, was fuming at every door with puffs of a heavy smoke from the burning grasses in which the fruit was packed; and Keighley saw that the fire was going to be—in department slang—a "worker." He could see the "steamers" of two shore companies drawing water from the end of the slip. He understood that their crews were in the

OLD CLINKERS

shed, trying to drive the fire forward; and he knew that it would be his duty to enter from the other end of the pier and catch the flames between the two attacks.

He shouted to the pilot, "Hol' us up to the door there!" He ran back to Lieutenant Moore. "Stay aboard here," he ordered. "If the blaze shows in the roof, take the top off her with the monitor. Go slow, though. Don't bring it down onto us." He called to the men, "Throw out yer lines! Make fast, now! Hang on to that line aft! Hol' it! Hol' it. . . . All right. Stretch in. In through the door here! Come on!"

He jumped up on the bulwarks as the engines reversed with a frantic churning astern. And then he saw a flicker of flame glimmer and grow between the

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timbers of the cribwork just above the water line, half way up the dock.

"Hol' on!" he cried to the four men who had leaped to the pier. "Drop one o' those lines. Take yer axes. Chop a hole in the floor planks inside. The fire's 'n underneath."

The men who were aboard the *Hudson* tossed the axes out to the others, and these rushed into the smoke, dragging the single line of hose. Keighley said to the Lieutenant, "Go in an' take charge there. See 'at no one gets lost in that smoke." Moore scrambled to the pier, and the captain ran forward along the bulwarks, peering down for an opening between the stringers of the cribbing.

He knew that the crew on the pier would take at least ten minutes to cut a hole through the three-inch planks,

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in the blind suffocation of that shed; and meanwhile, the fire would travel from end to end of the pier. He could see no opening larger than an inch slit between the foot timbers beside the bow of the boat. He started aft again.

"Shine," behind him, said, "It's covered at high water, cap."

Keighley spun around. "What is?"

"The hole. I t'ought—"

Keighley jumped down at him. "Where is it? Will it take a line o' hose in?"

"Sure," "Shine" said. "It'll take a bunch o' bananas in."

"Where is it?"

"It's—it's about there." He pointed down the pier. "It's 'n under water at high tide."

Keighley ran his fingers up the buttons of his rubber coat, and it fell off

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him like sleight-of-hand. His helmet dropped beside it. "Get me a heavin'-line," he said. And "Shine" gasped excitedly, "Say, cap, *you* can't find it. Yuh have to dive. It's where the 'club' ust to hide the stuff we swiped—till the cop got next t' it. I 'u'd make it in the dark. We fixed up a reg'lar joint in there."

The captain said, "Peel off, then. Hi, there! Bring us a heavin'-line"—and ran back to get it.

"Shine" dropped to the deck with a chuckle and began a race for "first in," gurgling an excited profanity as he kicked off his rubber boots. Diving on the water-front, on a midsummer night, was a way of earning a living that appealed to him.

"Beat y' in, Turk," he challenged. "Come on. Saturday's wash-day."

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"Turk" asked cautiously, "What's on?" He had an instinctive distrust of "Shine" as a type, as well as an acquired distrust of him as a "Jigger."

"Nuthin' 's on," "Shine" said as he came out of his blue flannel shirt and stood up, grinning, naked. "Where's the rope?"

Farley, from behind, tied one line under his arms. Captain Keighley gave him the end of another. "That's fer signalin'," he explained. "Jerk it three times if yuh want us to haul y' out. Jerk it twice if yuh're all right an' ready to take in the house. We'll tie this other one to the pipe. Jerk once to start the water. Over yuh go . . . Strip!" he said to Cripps.

"Shine" sprang upon the bulwarks, took the signaling-line between his

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teeth, and dived. He struck the water and went in as clean as a fish. A few bubbles rose and burst in the streak of light from the wheel-house window. The lines paid out smoothly through Keighley's hand.

They stopped—and he began to gather in the slack, stealthily. They jerked forward, and ran out with a rush. There was the pause of a crisis. Then the signal-line jumped twice, and Keighley cried, "He's in! Give him the pipe! Light up there!" Cripps tossed the nozzle overboard, and the others ran aft to lighten up the hose.

VII

“**S**HINE” had wriggled through the opening in the timbers and risen under the floor of the pier in a dense smoke that was lit with flames. He had swum to a slimy cross-beam and straddled it to draw a deep breath through a crack in the cribbing. And now he was hauling in the line, hand over hand, choking and sputtering. The nozzle rose between his knees. He jerked once on the signal rope, heard Keighley’s muffled cry of “Start yer water!” and threw himself on his belly on the nozzle and the beam. The air gushed in a mighty sough from the pipe. The hose bucked and kicked up under

OLD CLINKERS

him. The stream spurted from it and broke, hissing, on the blaze.

“Go it!” he said, through his teeth, riding the hose and clinging to the slippery timbers. “Go it yuh son of a mut!”

He had left the weight of discipline on the deck behind him with his uniform, and he had returned to the naked audacity of the days when he had obeyed no rules but those of the “club.” He was no longer a fireman; he was a young hoodlum enjoying an adventure, and he looked up at the blaze before him with a grin. He heard Lieutenant Moore’s squad chopping at the planks above him, and he listened contemptuously. He thought of Captain Keighley, and it was with the admiring thought of a younger “Shine” for the leader of his gang.

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He was still clinging to his beam when Cripps rose blowing behind him, having followed up the trail of the hose. But the flame and smoke had already been driven back sufficiently to clear the air; and "Shine" greeted the freckled "Jigger" with jubilant curses. "Come on here, Cripsey!" he cried. "We got her beat to a stan' still. Take a hold o' the spout. We'll slush it around." And when Cripps swam up beside him and threw his weight on the pipe, "Shine" shouted in the generous exultation of the moment, "Listen to Moore up there, tappin' on them planks like a footy woodpecker. . . . Slush her over in the corner there. . . . The cap's too wise fer *him*. He's too damn hard-headed an ol' clinker fer Moore."

Cripps blinked the water out of his

OLD CLINKERS

eyes and replied guardedly, "There's nuthin' in it fer us, any how."

"He's a better man'n Moore, all right, all right," "Shine" repeated. "We'd been all burned to blisters in the bottom o' that Dutch cotton-tub if it hadn't been fer him."

"Well, that's where Moore fell down," Cripps answered at the top of his voice. "He was scared stiff."

"The damn ol' clinker!" "Shine" said—referring to the captain. "That's a good name fer him, eh? 'Ol' Clinkers,' eh?" And they were laughing together in a sort of cowed respect and admiration for Keighley when they heard him say gruffly, behind them, "Play that stream lower, along the crib-work. Them timbers is afire outside."

"Shine" ducked his head, and then looked over his shoulder. The old man

OLD CLINKERS

reached an arm to the pipe and growled, "To yer right. To yer right."

They applied themselves to their work like a pair of schoolboys caught idling.

"Good enough," Keighley said at last. "Keep that stream off me, now." And climbing over the beam, he swam forward into the fading glow of the fire.

"Hully gee!" "Shine" said. "I wonder if he caught on."

He had "caught on." He understood that those two men had been the leaders, under Moore, of the attempt to drive him from the company; and he understood from their talk that Moore's followers had deserted him. He snorted the salt water from his nose; Mister Moore's claws were cut, then, sure enough. Well—

At the next cross-beam he saw that

OLD CLINKERS

the fire was blazing far ahead of him in a sort of flooring of loose planks; and he could make out what seemed to be two carpenter's horses covered with boards for a table, some boxes for stools, and a pile of burning straw that had been bedding. He swam back to bring the men, and found Farley and "Turk" Sturton splashing up with a second line of hose. He ordered them in with it as impassively as though he were in full uniform on the deck of the *Hudson* instead of straddling a sunken beam, the water trickling into his eyes from his grey hair, dressed in dripping underclothes and commanding four nude firemen who grinned at one another when he turned his head.

"Shut off that pipe," he said to "Shine," "an' light up on this other line."

OLD CLINKERS

He led them—splashing and laughing and tugging on their hose—into the drip of hot water from the lines of the shore companies above them. The stream from one of the *Hudson's* standpipes, dashing against the burning timbers outside, blew stinging sheets of spray through the slits of the cribbing on them. The warm smoke puffed back at them in stifling clouds. “Turkish b-bath,” “Shine” gasped. “Ouch! Gee! That about parboiled me lef’ lug! Gi’ me air! Gi’ me air!”

“Come on!” Keighley ordered.

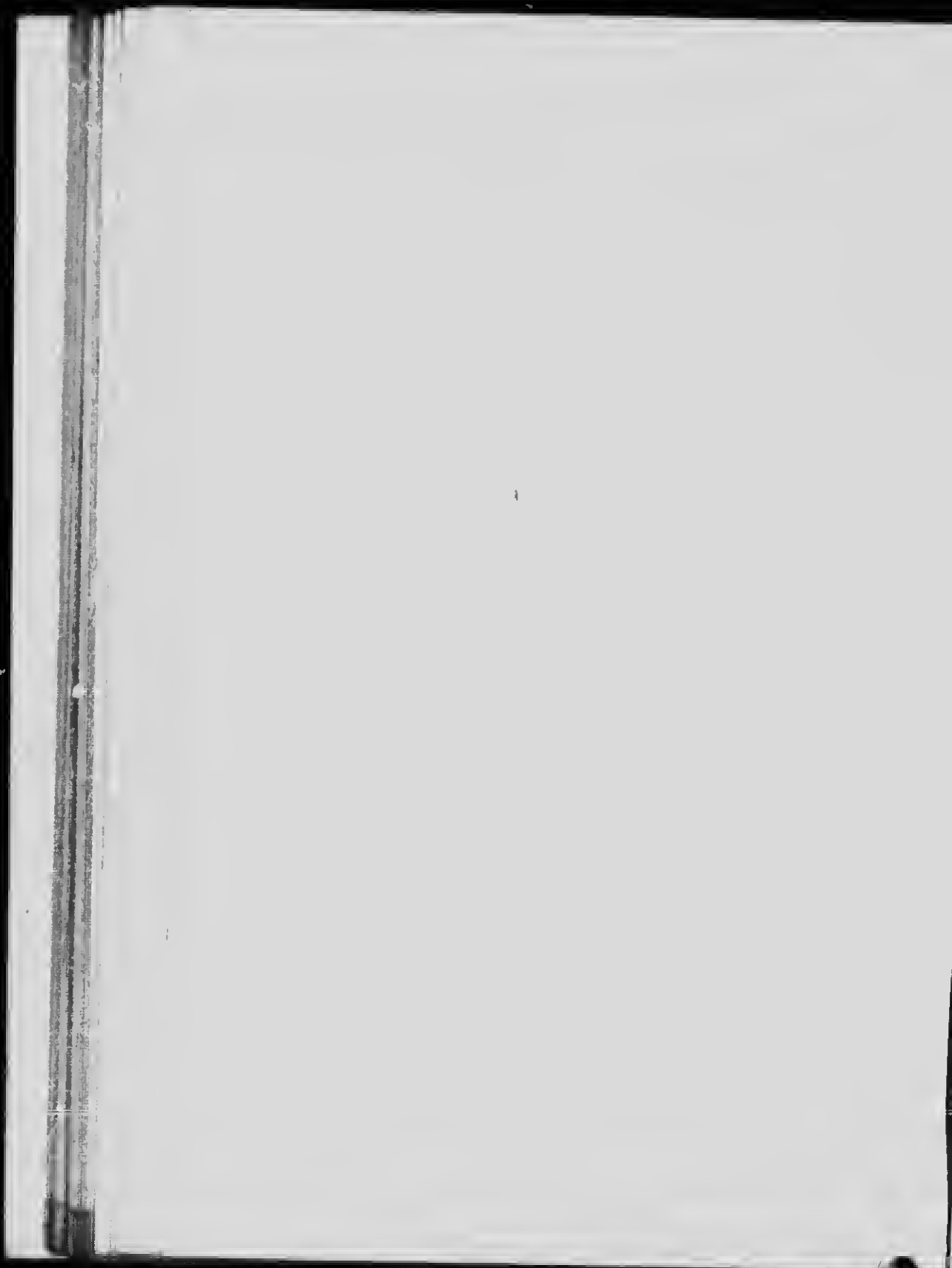
“Turk” Sturton followed the voice of authority. “Shine” followed the voice of the man. Cripps obeyed where obedience had been proved the wiser policy. Farley went to do the work for which he was paid. Their obedience drew them together like a yoke; they

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"I'll brain any man that tries to open this door before I give the word"
See page 40



OLD CLINKERS

helped one another, rubbed shoulders facing a common enemy, and touched hands in an almost friendly sympathy, sharing one task and one danger.

They stopped when the hose would come no farther, and Sturton sent back the signal for water. "Some Guinny had a roost in there," Farley said, peering through his fingers at the flames.

"Shine" replied, "Tust to be the gang's club-house. There she goes!" He shouted, above the noise of the stream, "She ain't insured, at that!"

Keighley rested his elbows on a beam, rubbed his smarting eyes, and grunted half-disgustedly. To him "Shine's" playfulness was the ingratiating gambling of a dog that had tried to bite him. He felt no inclination to pat the treacherous cur; but neither did he

OLD CLINKERS

purpose to kick him. To Farley "Shine" seemed to show a spirit of good-fellowship that let bygones be bygones and reduced their relations to the merely human intercourse of man and man. To Sturton, absorbed in his duties, it was the encouragement of a kindred spirit who took the joy of battle more noisily than he.

The blaze, caught at close range, seemed to snuff out as suddenly as if it had been no more than the flame of a candle; and when Keighley looked back over his shoulder in the darkness, he saw the spark of a belated lantern which Lieutenant Moore was lowering through the hole that his squad had cut in the floor. "There's the loot'nt," "Shine" sang out impudently. "If he ain't careful with that lamp he'll set fire to somethin'." And the laugh that

OLD CLINKERS

followed came heartily from the men.

Keighley made his way back to the lantern and called to Moore to put a ladder down. "Fire's out here," he shouted. "Go in up there an' help wet down."

He waited at the foot of the ladder until he was sure that the last glimmer of flame had been extinguished below; then, calling to his own squad to leave their lines and "back out," he climbed the ladder to the floor of the pier.

There was no one there to laugh at his ridiculous appearance, except the wharf watchman, who had returned to the scene of the fire from the safety of a ear-float in a neighboring slip. Keighley strode over to him. "Got any ripe bananas yuh don't want?"

"Sure," the man replied. "Take all youse can ate."

OLD CLINKERS

"Shine" came up the ladder, panting from a race with Sturton. Keighley touched him on the bare shoulder. "Take a bunch o' those bananas aboard with yuh," he ordered, "an' be damn quick about it."

VIII

TWENTY minutes later, the last of the fire had been drowned out; the *Hudson's* lines had all been picked up; and the crew sat along the bulwarks, eating bananas and waiting for the order to start back to their house. Cripps and Sturton, "Shine" and Farley were perched in a row along the edge of the engine-room skylight, "in their birthday clo's," each with a banana in his hand and a bulge in his cheek, fraternizing while they dried.

Sturton was saying, with an air of ownership, "She's a peach of a boat, jus' the same. We c'u'd've swamped out that blaze ourselves, if there hadn't been a steamer on the island."

OLD CLINKERS

"Shine," blinking watery-eyed, condemned the fire in resentful anathemas and bit savagely on the banana. "Damn scorch burned my pipes so I can't taste nuthin'," he complained.

Farley, with the tears still running down his cheeks, swung his heels blissfully, chewed, and regarded the lights of the city. "It's hot work," he said. "It's hot work, all right. But how'd yuh like to be pushin' a pen in one o' them little furnaces, fer instance?" He nodded at the late lights in the upper windows of a distant office building. "One o' them newspaper touts was tryin' to pump me th'other day about that fire in the cotton. 'Say,' he says, 'what takes you men into the fire department?' 'Oh, the pay,' I says. 'The pay.' 'Hell!' he says, 'the money's no

OLD CLINKERS

good to a dead man. Look at Bresnan.' ”

“The damn mut!” “Shine” put in.
“ ’T’wasn’t Bresnan’s fault he got nipped.”

“He didn’t mean it that way,” Cripps said.

“Well, how *did* he mean it?”
“Shine” demanded.

Farley waved his banana skin at the high building. “He meant ’at when it comes to this sort o’ bus’ness he’d sooner be settin’ up in one o’ them hen-coops peckin’ at an ink bottle an’ scratchin’ at a desk.” He gave a grotesque imitation of a clerk humped over his work, dipping his pen frantically, and writing, with his nose to the paper.

Cripps laughed and threw his banana at the pier. “To the woods with him!”

OLD CLINKERS

he said. "Gi'me a banana that's ripe. That last one tasted like a varnish shop."

Captain Keighley rose, in his uniform, from the ladder of the engine room behind them, and caught the general smile. He heard Cripps say, "This suits me all right." There were satisfied grunts of assent from the others. At the stern, Lieutenant Moore sat somewhat apart, spitting over the rail.

"Get yer clothes on," Keighley ordered gruffly. "Cast off there, Moore!"

And when the *Hudson* was spinning back leisurely to her quarters with a trail of banana skins in her wake, he said to his lieutenant in the wheel house, "I want yuh to see th' engineer to-morra an' write a report to headquar-

OLD CLINKERS

ters on that low pressure cylinder bus'ness."

Moore looked up to find the cool grey eyes fixed on him in a calculation of how much enmity there was left in him. He flushed. "Yes, sir," he said, almost gratefully.

Keighley turned away before he added with an effect of kindness, "All right. Dady'll explain about it to yuh to-morra. Go out an' tell those boys we want some bananas in here. I guess we're smoked as dry as they are."

It was not that Keighley felt the impulse of any unguarded generosity. He knew his fire-department too well for *that!* For there is this peculiarity in firemen: being free of any business worries or other anxieties concerning their incomes, they spend their days in efforts to "get even," to avenge slights

OLD CLINKERS

and repay friendships. They are men of no philosophy, unable to get outside of themselves into any calm view of their troubles, incapable of forgiving an injury and unable to understand such a capability in others; and they despise particularly the "quitter" and the "ingrate." Keighley did not wish to be sneered at, by his men, as a "quitter"; and he knew that if Moran did not help the "Jiggers" in their quarrel with their captain, they would consider the deputy-chief an "ingrate." The fight was "to a finish," whatever interludes of good-natured fellowship might happen to relieve it.

Keighley knew it. He merely accepted the truce in the spirit of a "game" antagonist who could fight without malice and win without spite.

He saw the boat berthed, watched the

OLD CLINKERS

men go off to their beds, and then turned in himself—relieved to be free of his daily reports—with a feeling that the truce would last over the next day, at least, which was Sunday.

IX

IN the morning it was announced in the newspapers that Chief Borden had been suspended, pending the decision of the courts on the charges against him, and that Moran had been appointed acting-chief in his place. Keighley opened his eyes wide upon the news, and then narrowed them cunningly as he considered it. He had expected that Borden would be thrown out neck and crop as a warning to all the "Anti-Jiggers;" and there was a glimmer of something hopeful in the half-heartedness of a tentative suspension. Keighley shut himself in his office with his desk telephone to find out what had happened.

OLD CLINKERS

It did not take him long to learn. One of his political friends in the upper circle explained that "the Boss" had objected to a fratricidal war that threatened to disrupt the whole fire department, to sacrifice public faith in the administration for no political ends, and to weaken the "organization" by dividing it against itself. The Fire Commissioner had compromised by suspending Borden instead of "breaking" him. Keighley listened—and shook his head. "That don't let *me* out," he said. "It may keep 'em from comin' after me on Broadway with a club, but it'll never keep 'em from stickin' me in the back some night around a dark corner."

He hung up the receiver and scratched the back of his neck doubtfully. It was his day off duty, but he was reluctant to take it—and leave the

OLD CLINKERS

lieutenant in charge. "Moore," he summoned him, "get that report done, will yuh? I'll see to cleanin' the boat."

"It's all right," Moore replied. "I can do both—if you want to get away."

Keighley looked out the window at the humid haze of heat that hung over the water. "I guess I'll be as cool here as anywhere," he said. "Go ahead with the report."

That Sunday was to be memorable in the records of the Weather Bureau as the hottest July day in forty years; and it was to be memorable in the records of the fire department for the most dangerous fire that had attacked the water front since the department had been formed. But the fire did not break out till sundown; and fate, while she was setting a terrific stage for Keigh-

OLD CLINKERS

ley's next appearance, allowed him one of those entre-acts that make the fireman's life such a thing of heart-breaking spurts of action and nerve-wracking blanks of peace.

Having given his orders for the day, he withdrew, upstairs, to a balcony off his bunkroom, where he sat all morning in the shade, watching the tugs and ferries, steamboats, floats and scows that bustled and wallowed and staggered past, squealing in a shrill impatience when they whistled, and puffing short of breath when they reversed. The water under their bows broke and fell back sluggishly. The swells in their wakes reeled away with an oily roll. The air was heavy with the drifting belch of their funnels.

It could not be said that Keighley really thought of anything while he sat

OLD CLINKERS

there. It was one of the characteristics of his mind that it worked best under the conditions of bewildering excitement that make clear thought impossible to most men. He did not even think about the "Jiggers;" he merely snoozed, with one eye on that matter, like a watchdog, until the noonday sun drove him from his balcony. Then he went sleepily to a neighboring restaurant for his dinner, having already telephoned that he would not be home.

It was a blistering afternoon, with a sun overhead that struck a quivering refraction from the dried and warped planks of the wharves, and a breeze that came hot across the sparkle of the bay where the glancing facets of small waves shone like a million gleaming little mirrors. The pierhouse stood at the water's edge, as bare as a lighthouse to

OLD CLINKERS

the beat and reflection of the heat, its row of open windows gaping in the sunlight like a line of gasping mouths. The men idled interminably, reading the papers, yawning for an interval and then reading them all over again. And Keighley dozed at his desk in his office—like Napoleon before a battle!—waiting for the attack of his enemy to develop the plan of his counter-assault.

A stiff easterly breeze sprang up at sunset. It came cool from the sea; and the crew of the *Hudson* received it as a grateful relief. But this same breeze—puffing steadily into the smolder of a small fire that had just broken out in the lumber yard of a furniture factory on the East River water front—blew the flames back through the stacks of seasoned boards like a blaze through kindlings; and while the *Hudson*, in answer

OLD CLINKERS

to a delayed alarm, was rounding the Battery and speeding up the river, the flames spread eagerly, in spite of all the efforts of the shore companies to check them, till, by the time the *Hudson* arrived, they covered as much ground as a prairie fire. Under a volume of dense smoke, they reached and writhed and leaped together, darting up their heads venomously, waving aloft their flickering crests, coiling back and striking low. When the wind lifted the pall that covered their trail, the piles of lumber could be seen burning like torches. In front of them, every now and then, a feathery stream rose white in the ruddy glow, spitting impotently into the air as the firemen, retreating, choked it and dragged it back; and overhead, continually, the triumphal sparks brightened and soared.

OLD CLINKFLIES

At the first sight of them Keighley's indolence of mind disappeared with the quick blink of an alert eye. "Aha!" he said to himself. "There's work for Moran." He shouted to the men, "Get out ev'ry line we got, boys."

He laid the *Hudson* broadside on, at the head of the slip, between two wharves, under the dark wall of the furniture factory; and he led up three lines of his largest hose to take the fire in the rear. He left the boat empty except for the pilot, standing black in the door of the lighted wheelhouse, and quiet except when Dady, the engineer, came up from the engine room, looked across the darkness towards the struggle which he could not see, and called out to the pilot, "How's she goin', Pete?"

The pilot answered several times, indifferently, that she was "going her own

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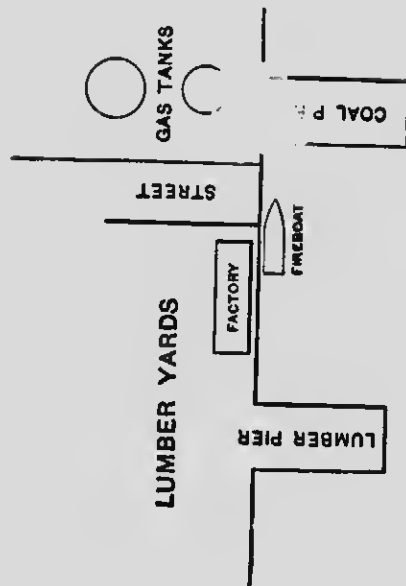
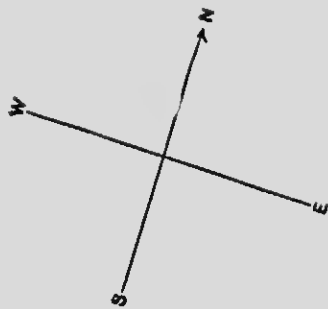
gait all right," that she was "chasing the boys all round the lot," that she had "the bit in her teeth." But at length he reported that the wind had fallen. Then, the next time, he said, "She's puffing in from the southeast." And at last he leaned his shoulder against the door-jamb and replied, "You better get your pumps well greased. The wind's come round strong from the south."

"South!" Dady sniffed the air. "That'll bring her back this way!"

"That's what I'm telling you."

The engineer popped into the hatch like a frightened rabbit into its burrow; and the silhouette in the doorway raised the shadow of a pair of night glasses to the black profile of a nose and stood watching.

In a moment, out of the darkness at



The scene of the fire on the piers



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the head of the slip, two figures in long rubber coats came striding into the light of the incandescent lamp at the stern of the *Hudson* and sprang aboard. They were Captain Keighley and Acting-Chief Moran; and they came forward rapidly towards the wheelhouse, Moran waving his arm with an excited gesture of authority.

"She's working back over there," he was saying of the fire. "You'll have to hold her, here, at the factory, and keep her from jumping that street to those gas tanks. If they blow up, it'll smash half the ward."

He ran up the ladder to the deck of the wheelhouse. "We can't get water to hold her, back there," he explained. "They're sucking air from those plugs already."

Keighley looked from the fire to the

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black wall of the factory, from the factory to the shadow where the street was hidden, and from the street to the huge gas tanks that seemed to be leaping and falling in the wavering light of the flames. "We got the water *here* all right," he said. He asked, "How wide is it?"

"It's—I don't know," Moran answered impatiently. "It's about seventy feet from the wall to the nearest tank. I can give you two water towers."

Keighley looked back over his shoulder. The boat was lying between the lumber wharf at her stern and the gas company's coal pier at her bows. "Fire's bound to back onto that yard wharf," he said. "We'll be between Hell an' Purgat'ry here." He looked up at the factory wall above him.

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"That'll be comin' down on top of us."
He nodded at the gas tank. "All right.
We can keep her off them."

Moran ran down the ladder and hurried aft. Keighley followed him.

Suddenly the old captain said, in the voice of a challenge, "I'll do it if the crew will."

Moran asked, "What's the matter with the crew?"

Keighley answered, "I guess *you* know as well as I do."

Moran stepped ashore. "I'm going around the factory," he said curtly, and vanished in the darkness.

Keighley stood stroking his sharp nose and smiling under his hand. Then he coughed a dry chuckle, turned, and ran along the trail of hose towards the fire.

He considered that he had "put it up"

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to Moran. It was Moran's turn, now, to learn the danger of promoting dissension in the place of discipline. Here was a fire big enough to break *him*, if it were badly handled; and he was relying on a disaffected crew and a discredited captain to handle it for him.

Keighley smiled as he ran; and he ran until the bitter smell of wet embers, from the burned wood underfoot, was wiped out of his nostrils by a puff of smoke that came warm and dry on his face. It sobered him. He slackened his pace to fill his lungs against the stifle, and proceeded carefully. A few yards farther on, the expected blast scorched him. When it had passed, he yelled, "Hi, there! Moore, there!" He got no reply. He broke into a run, stumbled over the hose, and fell among the burned

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beams and steaming ashes; and as he sprang to his feet again, the smoke was cut by a quivering current of heat, and he saw his crew crouched in a line behind their pipes, fighting in a wide semi-circle of flames that held back before them but reached out, roaring, on both flanks. "Back out! Back!" he called. "Yuh're no good here. Get back to the boat! We can't stop her here. Come along with that two-inch line! Lighten up here, some o' you men. Chase back an' shut off, Moore."

They obeyed him in a suffocated silence, dragging back the smaller hose. But it was impossible to move the larger lines as long as they were filled with the weight of water; and the pipemen who were directing these, blinded by the resinous smoke of yellow pine, remained bent double before the heat that came

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licking across them like the touch of flame.

Keighley ran to them. "Get back an' uncouple 'em. We'll never get out o' here this way."

A man at the farthest pipe pitched forward on his face and lay huddled. His fellows left their nozzle in its pipe-stick, caught him under arms and knees, and stumbled back with him. Their un-directed stream thrashed about like a snake pinned down at the neck; and the fire began to creep stealthily across the drying debris around it.

A smoking pile of half-burned lumber close at hand flared up in a sudden flame. Keighley threw himself on the other men, dragged them from their pipe, and drove them back. "We can't fool here," he cried. "We got to get around to them gas tanks."

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They abandoned, reluctantly, the two nozzles that were caught by the lugs in the erotches of the pipe-stieks, and retreated with the smaller line. But, even so, they had to wait until the water had been shut off before they dared break the couplings to save the hose; and every minute was an hour long to the impatient Moran waiting for them to stretch in their lines to protect the threatened gas tanks. He was fresh to his responsibility, and Keighley's cool insinuation of treachery had put him to the edge of a new fear.

When the men got back to the *Hudson* with the first lengths of hose, he stormed down on them angrily.

"What're you doing? Get a move on, will you? What the hell are you fooling round with that hose for, Keigh-

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ley? Stretch in over there, where I told you! Why the devil—”

Keighley, who had his own sense of dignity, set his thin lips in a tight line and looked back at the factory. “Where’s yer truck comp’ny?” he growled. “D’ yuh expect eight men to stretch in enough o’ this boat’s hose to feed two water towers?”

Moran’s voice rose to a hoarse curse: “G— — you! don’t you talk back to me! Do what you’re told. Get a hustle on, or, by—”

Keighley obeyed without more words. “Come along, boys,” he ordered. “Leave yer lines there.”

They jumped aboard the boat and cast off. The *Hudson* nosed her way across the head of the slip until she lay with her bows a few yards from the coal pier, her side to the foot of the street that

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separated the factory from the gas tanks, and her stern in the shadow of the factory wall. From that position, she would flank the advance of the fire; her supply lines, laid up the street, would front it; and her stern pipes, trained on the lumber wharf behind her would check the flames there. The great danger of the place was this: if the factory burned, the falling of its walls would crush the boat.

“Come along, now!” Keighley called.
“Open up that hose box.”

His men obeyed him eagerly.
“Shine” grumbled to Farley, “Moran thinks he’s the real screw. If he gets yappy, an’ Clinkers ’ll take an’ bite a piece off ’m.”

Farley, having always been of the captain’s faction, retorted jealously, “Don’t *you* worry.”

X

KEIGHLEY went forward and climbed to the roof of the wheel-house. He stripped the cover from the searchlight, and ordered the current switched to it from the engine room; and the leakage of light from the metal hood showed his hard face set in muscular impassiveness, strong-jawed.

He measured with his eyes the distance from the boat's side to the probable position of the water towers. "Two three-an'-a-half-inch lines, Moore," he called,—“eight len'ths. Four inch-an'-three-quarter ones—same len'ths.” Then he swung the searchlight around to the wall of the factory, and passed the circle of light, like a

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great hand, up the windows to the roof.

It showed a brick wall five stories high and apparently a brick and a half thick. He brought the light back to the window frames and grunted "Jerry-built!" He pushed up the helmet from his hot forehead and stood studying.

The fire, doubling back beside its own trail, where the half burned lumber was tinder to the flames, had wheeled around towards the factory with such rapidity that the glare of it already lighted the dark interior of the building. Where that glare went the blaze would soon be following; for the windows were unshuttered, the window trim was bare, and the walls were a frail shell filled with all the inflammable material of a furniture factory. To Keighley's mind, it would be impossible to protect such a structure.

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He narrowed his eyes and watched Acting-Chief Moran leading up a truck company to aid in laying the lines from the boat. Farther up the street, the lights of swinging lanterns marked the massing of other companies with hose and engines, in the probable path of the fire. He heard the whistle of the steamers, the bells of the trucks, the immense murmur of the pumps vibrating like a huge purr in the resounding night, and the faint rumor of roaring flames and falling timbers as low and wide as the reverberation of a surf. His nostrils dilated; his frown cleared. He put his hand on the wheel of the monitor nozzle beside him and shouted, "Loosen yer lines there, men. Hey, you at the wheel, ring Dady to jack her back! I want her in under that wall."

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The boat slid back, paying out its lines, until the captain and the wheelhouse came under the factory wall again. "Hold her!" he cried. "Start yer water! Look out fer yerselves there men!"

They scattered as he brought the standpipe around like a machine gun, laid it to train on the upper story of the factory, and spun the valve wheel. There was a shout of orders from the deck, answered by another shout from the engine room; and behind a shrill hiss of air and spray, a solid stream of water, under the mighty pressure of eight pumps, shot from the quivering nozzle and struck like an exploding shell in a burst of spray between two upper windows. For an instant that spray hid the wall there; then it vanished, sucked into a black gap; and, above the roar of

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water, glass crashed and bricks thudded; and the stream, swinging slowly from window to window, tore its way along above the line of sills. It rose to reach the edge of the roof, and ripped up the sheathing boards, and stripped the tin, and burst apart the rafters. It came down again to the windows, and bore in the wall above the floor, and battered in the bricks below the floor, and cut into the floor itself and stripped it to the beams.

By the time Moran had fought his way to the pier—through the rush of a truck company retreating from a fall of bricks—half the wall of the upper story had been carried away, the section of the roof above it hung down in a broken wing, and the stream, thrown up to clear the ruin, shot over the building, singing fiercely.

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“Get yer men away from there!”
Keighley shouted.

Moran cleared the bulwarks with a running jump and sprang up the ladder to the wheelhouse top. He clutched Keighley by the breast of his rubber coat and faced him, white with fury, his lower teeth bared as if he were going to bite, his eyes like two balls of yellow glass in the blaze of the searchlight, speechless.

Keighley caught his wrist and growled, “What’s the matter with yuh?”

Moran flung him off and yelled, “What’s the matter with *you*? Why don’t you do what you’re told, you — —! Did *I* tell you to do that?” He threw out his arm at the wrecked factory.

Keighley shook his head. “No. Yuh hadn’t sense enough to.”

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The captain was a tall, big-shouldered build of Irish ruffian, as hard with age as an old oak. Moran was shorter, stockier, heavier in the waist. They drew back from each other with a menacing stiffening of neck and shoulders. Then Moran said, "You're relieved of your command here. Report to me to-morrow at headquarters."

Keighley turned to his pipe. "Relieved be damned! I'm responsible fer this boat, an' I'll take her back to her berth." He threw the stream down to strike the wall again, and shouted, "If we lay here feedin' yer water towers till the fire drops the side of a house on us, where d' yuh s'pose we'll be? We got water to smash it in now. We won't have it when we're pumpin' yer six lines full, will we? There's time enough



They had climbed the bunker ladders, and found the port
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to stretch in after them bricks is down. Look out, there!"

A section of the weakened wall, taken in the middle broke and dropped on itself like a curtain. Half the roof collapsed and bore down the upper floors; and the stream, striking free on the ruin, began to pick it down, course by course, as Keighley laid the pipe to it.

He did not so much as glance at Moran again. In the excitement of his work, he appeared to have brushed aside the quarrel from his thoughts as he would have brushed aside any man who got in his way at such a time. It was a manner that made all blustering insistence of authority impossible to Moran. He waited for the opportunity to reassert himself.

"All right!" Keighley shouted, at last. "Shut her off."

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The stream weakened, fell, and ceased. Keighley turned the searchlight on the street and called, "All right. Now put her back where she was!" He dropped down the wheelhouse ladder and ran aft as the boat drew up again at the foot of the street.

Moran stood a moment, the jaw muscle working in his cheek. Then he went ashore in grim silence.

It was a silence that promised him satisfaction in the morning, when Keighley should be notified that he was relieved of his command.

"Shine" chuckled as he dragged on his line. "Moran got *his* dose, I guess."

Farley replied, "There's trouble in it fer th' ol' man, though."

"Shine" retorted, in his turn, "Don't *you* worry!"

XI

TEN minutes later the whole street was blotted out in smoke. The streams roared from the nozzles, and were lost in it. The pipemen, with heads down and eyes shut, braced themselves against the back-pressure and fought for breath. The officers, staggering into them, shouldered them forward, smothering. The whole line throttled in darkness, without orders, without head, swayed and struggled and stood helpless.

Then, like a stroke of lightning, the flame split the smoke before them. The air seemed to explode in a blaze of burning gases; the heat whipped into their faces with a stinging lash; and the

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whole row of lumber piles that faced them lighted up together like a long ling of beacons.

Against such a fire the streams were useless. They could beat back the flame they struck; but as soon as they were moved from the steaming lumber which they had saved, the heat licked it dry again, and the flames leaped back to it. Behind the fringe which the pipes could cover, the whole yard blazed untouched. The windows in the rear of the factory cracked and broke; the smoke began to pour out through the wrecked roof; the fire rose from floor to floor as fast as it could climb; and it climbed unchecked, despite the three streams from the nearest water tower that fought it.

Moran licked the tail of his mustache and watched nervously. The largest of the gas tanks towered behind him, in the

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full current of heat which rained a steady shower of sparks against it; and when he glanced back at it his head jerked around with a twitch. He ordered one of the deck pipes of the water tower turned on the tank to wet it down; and his voice was hoarse and anxious. Then, when the blaze in the factory reached the varnish room and flared out with double fury, he rushed around, concentrating all his streams on the one whirl of flame. The sides of the tank steamed dry at once. He called out for another line to be stretched in from the *Hudson*, and his voice came shaken from a tense throat. He was losing his head. The boat line did not come. In desperation he started down the street, and was met by Keighley hastening up at the head of a squad of the boat's crew.

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“For —— sake, Keighley, hurry up!” he gasped; and his tone was a confession of weakness that was willing to forgive anything—for the moment—for the sake of aid.

The line was stretched and coupled as fast as drill. The water spouted to the tank and drenched it. Moran took off his helmet and wiped his forehead, trembling in spite of his efforts to control himself.

Keighley came striding back. “That coal pier’s goin’ up if we don’t keep her wet,” he said. “It’ll be worse than the fact’ry fer the tank there.’

Moran tried to curse. “The—the whole damn place’s going up,” he complained feebly.

“The blaze on that lumber pier astern of us ’ll scorch us out if we don’t keep it down,” Keighley continued. “We

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want a stream on the wall alongside the boat. Were pretty near pumpin' our limit as it is."

Moran shook his head in a dogged helplessness.

"What're yuh goin' to do?" Keighley insisted. "We got to do somethin'—an' be quick about it. Look-a-here!" He hurried down to the boat, with Moran at his heels.

The *Hudson* was lying at the head of the slip, in the angle of two fires that swept her deck with a burning blast of heat and smoke. Lieutenant Moore had turned one of the aft standpipes on the blazing factory and was fighting back the flames in the nearest windows; but the stream was too weak to be more than a small defiance. He had started the deck spray on the stern, and the men there were working in a shower;

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but it was a tepid shower, and the metal and cement of the deck were already steaming under it.

The coal wharf at the bow was exposed to all the sparks that blew over its great wooden hoist and bunkers. And if the fire took that wharf, the whole defence would be outflanked; the blaze would blow from pier to pier down the water front; the gas tanks would be caught from the rear.

“Hi, there!” Keighley shouted. “Turn yer forrud pipes on there an’ keep that pier wet. Two—four—eight—eleven—Hell! We got to save som’ers. That won’t do.” He turned to Moran. “What’re yuh goin’ to do about it? There’s too many streams as it is. They ain’t strong enough.”

But the acting-chief was at the end of his resources. It was his first big

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fire, and it was too much for him. He had the bulldog courage that can take up a position and hold it, fighting, to the last gasp of ruin; but he had not the quality of mind to stand on the height of responsibility unbewildered, and direct confusion and overrule defeat. His face was as blank as his mind; and Keighley saw it.

“Take charge o’ that boat a minute,” the captain said.

Moran took a step towards the *Hudson*; and when he stopped and turned again, Keighley was off up the street.

The old man had a plan—a plan that was drawn from his experience of early volunteer days, when streams were too weak to tear up a fire by the roots, and fire-fighters were always on the defensive, checking an enemy that could not be successfully attacked.

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He ordered the pipe of the nearest water tower to be raised to the perpendicular, so that the stream from it rose straight in the air and fell back on itself like a geyser. Then he trained the two deck pipes of the same tower to cut into the stream with two deflecting ones; and the three streams, meeting in mid-air, fought together in a spout of spray that spread in all directions, formed a "water curtain" which no spark could pass, and was blown by the wind in a wide shower over the threatened tanks.

"Shut off that other line! Chief's orders!" he shouted to the men who were still flailing the tank sides with a solid stream.

"Will that shower be enough, cap'n?" one of the water tower men asked him.

"Sure," he said. "Yuh can't set fire

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to metal, can yuh? Supposin' the heat does swell up yer gas a bit, ain't those telescope tanks? Yuh couldn't explode onc o' them if yuh opened it an' dropped a match in. It 'd go out. It's got to have air, ain't it? She's safe as long 's she don't warp a leak."

He ran along through the scorch to the second tower, and watched it pouring a waste of water on a fire that was already held by the hose from the engines. "We're goin' to cut this tower off," he called. "Chief's orders! Yuh can't put that blaze out; yuh got to let it burn out. The other crews can hol' it. Get back up the street there, where there's buildin's. Stick to it, boys. We got to have this water to keep her from gettin' down the piers behind yuh."

He doubled back to the water front.

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"Two—three—five," he muttered.

"That'll do it."

The acting-chief ran into him in the smoke. Keighley clutched him by the elbow. "What're yuh doin' here?" the captain cried. "Why ain't y' aboard that boat?" And Moran turned and followed him like a lieutenant.

XII

THEY sprang aboard the *Hudson* together. Keighley ran to the pipe that was feeding the second water tower and cut it off at the gate. "Get this standpipe on the fac'try," he ordered Moran. "We got the water now—all yuh want. I'll look after the pier."

"Shine" wiped the tears from his eyes and stared open-mouthed. Moran shouldered past him and swung around the standpipe and turned it on the blazing windows. Keighley clambered up the ladder to the wheelhouse top and began to bellow his orders through his hands.

There followed the hottest half hour

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that the *Hudson* ever knew. The coal wharf had taken fire, and the full power of the two monitor nozzles was needed to subdue it. Meanwhile the belch of heat from the burning factory, checked only by the lesser streams from the waist of the boat, swept the deck like the blast from a furnace. The paint peeled from the smokestack, blistered on the wheelhouse, bubbled on the rail. The men crouched behind the bulwarks, their eyes smarting, their throats parched, silent except for a feeble complaint from "Shine" that they would be "spittin' black buttons fer a month." Moran clung to his standpipe. Lieutenant Moore struggled against the kick of a pipe which he had turned on the burning pier at the stern of the boat. Keighley's voice came to them all, thin and far, "To yer

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left, Moore. Higher up there, chief. Stick to it, boys!"

There is, in such men, an ideal of self-subordination as strong as the instinct of liberty itself. In the face of danger it held them together, under Keighley, like an oath. "Stick to it!" "Shine" gasped. "Stick to it an' roast! Roast! He don't care! The damn ol' clinker!" Farley muttered, "Ol' hunk o' slag!" They were filled with a heroic contempt for him, for themselves, and for their work; and with an ironical and bitter loyalty they held to their posts. The lieutenant blinked the spray from his stinging eyes and turned for another look at the acting-chief beside the standpipe and Keighley commanding on the wheelhouse. Moran, at every crash of falling floors in the factory, expected to see the broken wall forced

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out, and was glad that, by virtue of Keighley's foresight, the bricks that might have crushed the boat were already lying in a harmless pile at the water's edge.

It was the culmination of Keighley's triumph—the triumph of the man who forgets himself in his work, who commands unquestioned because he orders what must be done of necessity in the situation, who humbles himself to his duty and is exalted by it.

He had drowned out the flames in the coal wharf; he turned one of his nozzles on the factory, and poured his tons of water through the broken wall, and cut off the flames in the windows. The roof had long since fallen, and now the walls followed it; and the hot bricks, just missing the stern of the *Hudson*,

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hissed in the water like a blacksmith's irons. For a moment it seemed that the opening of the building only gave the flames a fiercer draft. They rose sky-high with the roar of a volcano in eruption. But they fell as suddenly; and, instead of smoke, it was steam that rose in clouds, and, instead of the busy crackling of new fuel, the men heard the sizzle of hot coals drowning in the flood that was pouring in on them.

The final relief came from the shore companies that closed in on the ruin, fighting their way through the smolder of the yard, and beating down the dying struggles of the flames with a score of pipes. To Keighley's orders, the boat drew off and turned broadside to the burning lumber pier and fairly swept it from its piles. The acting-chief left

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his nozzle and went forward dazedly.

"All right, chief!" Keighley called to him. "We got her beat."

Moran sat down weakly on the bulwarks and wiped his face. "Gee!" he said. "I'm done out. Phew!"

He sat there, unnoticed, until the last flicker of the blaze had been stamped out; then, knowing that the shore companies would be waiting his orders to return to their houses, he went to Keighley. "All right, captain," he said gruffly. "The men ashore can finish this. Let me off here, and go back to your quarters."

Keighley nodded. "All right, boys," he cried. "We're through. Pick up an' get away out o' here."

He felt the prompt response of loyalty in the way that every man hurried to obey him with a will. He observed

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that Lieutenant Moore received his orders with an almost obsequious meekness. He heard laughter from the stern of the boat as it steamed down the river; and from the looks of the men, as he went around among them inspecting his scorched paint, he knew that they had watched his quarrel with Moran, and were proud of him for "winning out."

When the boat had been tied up, and the men had trooped upstairs to their bunk room noisily, he sat down at his desk before the open window and looked out at the first rosy peep of morning over the horizon. His old eyes relaxed the thoughtful pucker of their wrinkles and filmed with a pathetic moisture. He blinked; his mouth twitched. He looked down quickly at his papers, tore a leaf from his daily calendar, rolled it

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in a ball, dropped it in the waste-basket
—and smiled. When he looked up
again, it was to meet, with a changed
face, the beginning of a new day.

XIII

BUT when he had slept on it, he was not quite so sanguine, for though he recognized that he had overcome the active opposition of his crew, of his lieutenant, and now of the acting-chief, he understood that such victories could be but temporary. He was standing against the interests of these men; and by whatever emotions of fear and respect he had held them back, the emotion would pass and the interest remain. He conceded to himself that Moore was negligible, that the men were almost so. (If he exercised even ordinary care, he could protect himself from whatever small malice there might be among them.) But if Moran and the Com-

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missioner spared him, it would be with the hope of winning from his gratitude what they had not been able to force from his fear—namely, a disposition to aid the progress of the benevolent association of the “Jiggers” by favoring their members in his crew. And he was determined to do no such thing.

He turned to the newspaper account of the night’s fire—with the fireman’s usual excuse to himself that he wished to see how the reporter had “botched it”—and he read with sarcastic relish a detailed account of how Moran had used a “water-screen” to save the gas tanks, and had so headed off a “conflagration” that at one time threatened to wipe out half the East Side. He did not remember that by shouting “Chief’s orders!” he had himself given Moran the credit of that move. He accepted

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the report as another of those newspaper inaccuracies which are a tradition among firemen. He flung the paper aside and went out to start the men at work restoring the *Hudson's* blistered paint.

It is the rule of the department, of course, that no fireman shall talk "for publication;" and the unfortunate "newspaper tout" who reports a fire has to depend to an impossible extent upon his own eye. It is only after he has made personal friends of men or officers that he gets any "inside story" of what has happened, and then only on condition that he is careful to conceal the name of his informant. And it is not merely the "authorities" who enforce this rule; the men themselves uphold it; and the fireman who allows himself to be interviewed suffers the

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same sort of treatment from his fellows that a schoolboy gets from his class when he "tattles" to his teacher. The men carry in their inside pockets, secretly, newspaper clippings in which they have been mentioned honorably, but they only show these—ostensibly at least—to complain that their names have been misspelled. Such is the modesty of nature!

Now the "newspaper tout" whom Farley had mentioned on the way back from the fruit wharf fire, had a shrewd suspicion of what was going on, under the surface of affairs, among the crew of the *Hudson*. His attempts to "pump" the men, after the burning of the *Sachsen*, had failed for the obvious reason that the secret to be concealed was a dangerous one. But, after the fire in the lumber yard, he caught a

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friendly fireman off duty, full of an enthusiastic admiration for Keighley's work on the gas tanks, and he succeeded in finding out enough to show him that he was on the trail of a "good story" if he could only hunt it down.

After some preliminary scouting and scenting about, he came boldly to Keighley himself. "Captain," he said—for the captain knew him by sight—"where did you learn that trick of making a water screen with three streams of a tower?"

The captain settled down in his swivel chair and replied, "I'm runnin' a fire-boat. What're yuh talkin' about water towers?"

The reporter nodded. "I know. I was at that lumber yard blaze. I saw you do that trick with the water screen."

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Keighley said, "Say, young fellah, why don't yuh read the papers?"

"Oh, I know all about that," the newspaper man replied. "That's the way the papers had it. But I saw what happened."

Keighley rose. "Yuh did, eh? Then what the hell 're yuh botherin' *me* about it fer? I got enough to do t' atten' to my own bus'ness without pokin' any nose into newspaper muddles. *You* atten' to yer toutin' an' I'll atten' to my fires."

"All right, captain," the reporter called after him as he went out. "I'll get that story yet."

(And he got it, too. *This is it!*)

XIV

DURING that same day, Keighley received various hints, from various go-betweens, that the men in power were prepared to forgive and forget if he would take the first opportunity to "make himself solid" and come into the fold. He "jollied them along," gave them evasive answers, or turned stupid and failed to understand what they were proposing. (The weather aided him, by making activity uncomfortable even for politicians.) He had the sure hope that the courts would dismiss the charges against Chief Borden and compel his reinstatement under the Civil Service laws. He heard rumors that the Fire Commissioner had had a fall-

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ing out with "the Boss;" and he expected that with the autumn there might be changes in the department that would settle the whole quarrel. Meanwhile, it was his best policy—and his natural inclination—to stand firm. "I got nuthin' against the 'Jiggers,'" he replied to their emissaries. "I never did anythin' to 'em. There's no trouble here at all." And if they pressed upon him the advantages of "getting square up above," he said, "Well, I'll think it over. I'll think it over."

He even received with such evasions "Tim" Noonan, the leader of the "Sixt'"—Noonan of the suave Irish diplomacy—Noonan who had served with him as a fire laddie in the red-shirt days of the volunteer fire brigade. Wherever Noonan went, he closed the

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doors behind him; Keighley heard him in a silence that was irritating; and Noonan, in the breathless office, soon arrived at a blood-hot exasperation that kept boiling up red in his face.

"Well," Keighley promised placidly, for the fourth time, "I'll think it over."

Noonan plucked from between his teeth the frayed butt of a cigar chewed to tatters. "Now look a-here," he said hoarsely, "I'm yer friend I'm tellin' yeh, Dan; but I can't go back with no such answer. An' *you* know it. Take it er leave it. There's promotion in it the one way, an' there's trouble th' other. Are yeh with us, er are yeh not, now?"

Keighley looked out the window and scratched the back of his hand. "This crew," he said, "when I took a hold here, it was the makin' of a mince-pie.

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An' it 'd 'a' been the worst mess o' nuthin' in the whole department if I'd run it Jigger er anti-Jigger er anythin' else but straight bus'ness to put out fires. I got nuthin' against the actin'-chief ner his gang. They ain't botherin' me any."

Noonan had a long, round upper lip that met a round, protruding under one in a mouth like a rent in a rubber ball. He opened it, and then shut it again in a politic effort to control his temper, "Dan," he said at last, "I like a joke, but I'm no more a damn fool than y' are yerself,—mind that now! Yeh've been fightin' half yer comp'ny fer the month gone, an' yeh think yeh've won. They ain't botherin' y' any now—no. Yeh think they've had enough—an' mebbe they have. Mebbe they have.

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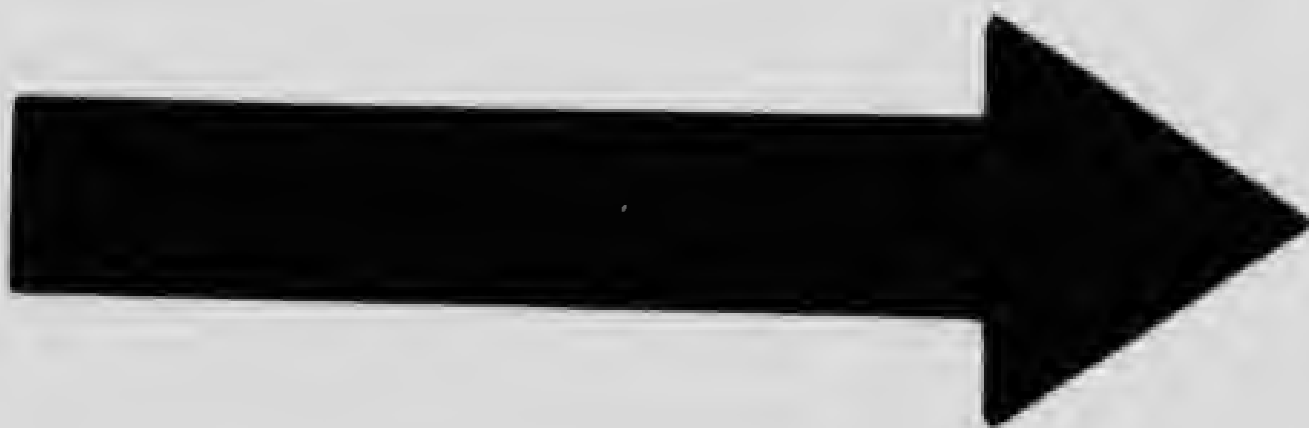
But there's them that ain't!" He stopped himself. He plugged his mouth with his cigar again, and puffed it till it crackled. "Have sense, now," he said. "Have sense, man. Here's yer chance to get the best that's goin'. Will yeh take it er leave it?"

Keighley had turned to listen to the tinkle of a telephone bell in the sitting room where the apparatus of the fire alarm was stationed.

"Will yeh take it er leave it?" Noonan demanded.

Keighley did not answer. He swung around in his swivel chair. Some one rapped at the door, and he called, "Come!"

Lieutenant Moore looked in to report, "A telephone call from headquarters. Soap works afire at Nohunk. They



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want us to keep it off the coal docks.”

They were the department's coal docks.

Keighley ordered, “Cast off.” He turned to Noonan. “Better come along with us,” he said. “It'll be cooler outside.”

Noonan had found it hot work trying to lead old obstinacy in the office. The boat looked inviting. There were two chairs under an awning in the fantail. “All right,” he said, and went sulkily aboard.

Keighley took him to the wheelhouse, instead of to the stern. There was, of course, a pilot at the wheel; and Noonan waited in impatient expectation that the captain would give his orders there and then go aft to finish their conversation. But as soon as the boat was under way, the men, clearing the decks

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for action, began to roll up the awning and carry the chairs below; and Noonan looked at the captain with the expression of a man who had been tricked.

With his gray side-whiskers and his long lip, he was the sort of Irishman who would have made an amiable parish priest if circumstances had not made him a ward leader—the sort of man to whom politics is a benevolent affair of “gettin’ jobs” for his friends and loyally keeping them from his enemies. The only dishonesty in public office that he understood was the dishonesty of treason to the “organization,” and he despised the political renegade as he would have despised the turncoat who deserts his church.

Jigger and anti-Jigger were, as has been said so often, merely factions of the organization, and he could come to

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Keighley with a charitable desire to convince the captain that he was standing in his own light. Keighley and he had been young together. They were old friends, though they had not met for some time. Yet Keighley received him without trust, and held him off.

He smoked resentfully; and the head wind, through the open window of the wheelhouse, blew the cigar ashes in his eyes.

Keighley stood at the pilot's shoulder, his hands behind him, pretending that he was watching innocently the course they steered. He said, at last, "Volunteer firemen up to Nohunk."

Noonan blinked and grunted.

Keighley glanced at him slyly. After a pause he added, "It'll remind y' of ol' times."

Noonan understood that Keighley



He began to screw out the tortuous scrawl of his report
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was trying to placate him; and he was willing to be placated. He was not shrewd enough to see that the captain was playing on him. He smoked, somewhat mollified.

"Ol' Dolger," Keighley said, "the may'r—er whatever he is—he's got all the boys with him. They elect him to ev'rythin' up there. . . . D' yuh remember the Red Crows?"

Noonan made an amicable sound of assent in his throat.

"Dolger'll remind y' o' Nip himself."

The memory of the past—the past that has always such a poetical appeal for the Celt—twisted Noonan's lips in a pleased, reluctant smile. "Nip was a great boy," he said. "A great boy!"

The boat was then darting and dodging through the cross traffic of the

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lower river. By the time the railroad terminals were passed and the breeze began to come, less bituminous, from open water, Noonan was laughing and talking, with his hat on the back of his head and a blur in his eyes. "D' yeh mind," he would say,—“d' yeh mind the time I put th' ash-bar'l over the hydrant, an' the boys o' Big Six went by it? Ho-ho! They near broke ev'ry bone in me body!” Or: “Will y' ever ferget the night we run Silver Nine into the ditch at the foot o' Chatham Hill?” Or: “Hurley, was it? Well, any way, he put his fist into me mouth, just as I opened it to yell 'She's over!' an' I set down in the road an' coughed up teeth be the hand'ful.”

Keighley nodded and coughed, puckered his eyes appreciatively, and cracked his finger joints behind his

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back. He did not laugh; it was as hard for Keighley to laugh as it is for most men to sing—when sober. Besides, he knew enough of Noonan to understand that although the politician's joviality was not all assumed—although even the fond moisture of his eye was not from the eye only—old friendships would not change present policies, and Noonan did not intend that they should.

When Keighley caught the warm odors of fields and orchards from the Nohunk shore, he reached mechanically for the pilot's glasses. "Them was wild days," he said, focusing the binoculars.

"We ust to hang together well enough *then*, Dan," Noonan insinuated.

Keighley studied a mist of light smoke that lay along the water's edge, and worked his lips in the twitching of

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a dryly contemptuous smile. Then he dropped his cap on the chair beside him—without lowering the glasses—and with one hand began to loosen his neck-tie. "Looks like Dolger's got his work cut out fer 'm," he said.

The boat went throbbing through the water at a "fourteen-mile gait." There was silence in the wheelhouse.

"Take us in south o' th' ol' pier," Keighley ordered. He caught the heel of one boot with the toe of the other, and jerked off the elastic gaiter; the glasses did not leave his eyes. "If yuh 'd like to come in with us, Tim, I can give y' a turnout," he said to Noonan. A fireman passed under the window. "Bring me me rubbers," Keighley ordered him, without looking down. "Yuh're allowin' fer the current, are yuh?" he said to the pilot. Lieutenant

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Moore came to the doorway. "Get the starboard lines out," Keighley directed, without turning. He kicked off the other gaiter, after loosening it with the toe of his stockinged foot. "It'll remind y' of ol' times," he said to Noonan. And his orders and his remarks were all given in the same absent-minded voice of a man who has his eyes fixed and his mind busy on another matter.

Noonan laughed admiringly. "That aint the way Nip ust to give his orders, Da.," he said.

XV

FROM that distance, the village of Nohunk was a cluster of yellow houses that looked as if they had been rolled down the sides of the Nohunk valley and piled together on the water's edge. Behind them, a trail of small cottages marked the path by which they had come from the hill-top. In front of them lay the soap works and the brewery—as if their greater bulk had given them greater momentum—with their foundations awash at high tide, on the far side of an open field at which the houses had all stopped.

It was this field that had saved the village from the fire; for the local firemen, massing in the open, had been able

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to force the flames back on the water front, following them and confronting them as they extended down the piers towards the brewery and the coal yards. And Captain Keighley, putting in at a disused and broken pier, on the bank of the extending line of fire, planned to drive it back before it reached the coal wharves, and to hold it back until the shore companies could drown it out.

To a boat that could lift its hundreds of gallons of water with every drive of its pumps, the blaze was a bonfire. To a crew of men who knew that they were beyond the reach of the departmental authorities, the whole affair was a warm-weather lark. Under a stern spray that kept them cool, they manned their lines in blue shirts and old trousers, all of them bareheaded and some of them in their bare feet. Keighley,

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on the wheelhouse deck, and Lieutenant Moore, in the fantail, wore helmets and rubber boots; but Noonan was the only one who put on a waterproof coat, and he was directing a monitor nozzle, under Keighley's instructions, with all the deadly earnestness of an old man at play.

Two standpipes were trained on the pier for which the fire was reaching, and a third was turned on the nearest coal wharf, to wet it down. But the brewery was beyond the reach of the stationary nozzles, being across the road from the foot of the pier at which the *Hudson* had tied up. And Captain Keighley, peering through the smoke, could see a squad of volunteer firemen vainly trying to reach the roof of the brewery with streams that fell short of the third story. He was ordering a line

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of hose stretched up the pier to aid them, when a fat man, red-shirted, in the white helmet of a chief, came puffing corpulently down the wharf towards the boat, waving a speaking trumpet.

It was Dolger.

He was whiskered like a Boer, and his beard swept the embroidered front of a yellow plastron that reached to the bulge of his waist. He waved his hand at them, and yelled breathlessly, "Vill idt cost de county?"

Noonan forgot his duties at the standpipe and came over to ask, "What is it, Dan? What's he talkin' about?"

Keighley shook his head and looked away from the spectacle of an excited old man making himself ridiculous. Dolger ran to the squad in the stern, and shouted, "Vat'll idt cost de county?"

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“Shine” answered impudently over his shoulder, “Nuddings, if yuh don’t charge us fer the water.”

“No, dot’s free,” Dolger panted. “Come along mit idt. I’ll show yah vat idt is to do.’

The men grinned, and went on with their work of getting their hose out of its box. “Shine” said, “Dot voss Santa Claus in der red shirt. Vee gates vos loss mit ’im.”

Dolger threw back his shoulders and blew out his belt like a drum major. “De cabt’n—vich is he?” he demanded.

Keighley had turned his back to direct the stream which Noonan was neglecting, and the men, glancing up at the wheelhouse, understood that their captain intended to leave the resplendent chief to them to deal with.

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Dolger explained majestically, "I am de chief. Diss feuer iss by me."

They laughed with the contempt of the regular for the volunteer, of the professional for the amateur. They began to couple up a line of hose, under the lieutenant's orders, dragging the lengths out on the pier.

"Stob!" Dolger ordered. "Stob idt so!" he was suddenly calm and haughty. "I don' vand yah." They paid no attention to him. He waved his hands at them, with the palms out, as if swimming, in a gesture that was ridiculous. "Go away back! I don' vand yah. Nein!"

"Shine" with the nozzle, as he shoved past, said, "Run away, Dutchy! Nix kommer ous. Go an' lost yerself!" And Dolger put his trumpet to his

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mouth and ran up the pier, shouting indignant German to the men in the roadway.

Noonan had been watching the incident from the wheelhouse. "What is it, Dan?" he asked. "What's he goin' to do?"

"I guess he's goin' to give us what Silver Nine gave the Red Crows," Keighley answered, without a smile. "It'll remind y' of ol' times."

"Aw, quit yer foolin, Dan," Noonan said anxiously. "What's he up to?"

"He's goin' to bring his gang down here to take charge o' the boat," Keighley assured him. "How 're yer teeth?"

Noonan licked his lips. "No!" he exclaimed.

"That's right."

Noonan began to unbutton his rubber

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coat. He snorted, "Huh!" bellicosely.

"Here," Keighley said, "tend to yer nozzle. Don't let it play in one place. It'll knock holes in that wharf, if yuh do."

Noonan took the directing-wheel again, and began to swing the nozzle from side to side mechanically, watching over his shoulder for Dolger's return. Keighley went down the ladder to take charge of his crew, and left Noonan alone on the wheelhouse top. And when Dolger's men appeared running through the smoke with their chief's white helmet leading them like an ikon, it was Noonan who saw them first. He raised a warlike shout of "Hi, boys, hi! Hooks an' axes! hooks an' axes!"

The men looked up curiously at the charge of the redshirts.

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Keighley said, "Go on with yer work."

Noonan screamed, "All aboard! They're comin'! They're comin'!" And then, seeing that the crew would be taken unprepared, he swung around his nozzle to repel the attack himself.

He had had no experience of the strength of such a stream, and before Keighley could get back to the wheelhouse to interfere, the water struck the deck of the old pier almost at the feet of the volunteers, lifted the loose planks on the rebound, and overwhelmed the company like a burst of surf. Dolger's white helmet flew on the crest of it; the first men, taken in the faces with the sheet of spray, were thrown back bodily on the others; and when the stream, tearing its way through the planking, struck a stringer that had already

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rotted from its supporting piles, that section of the pier collapsed under the sprawling weight of the fallen men, and dropped them, with the chief himself, into the water.

By that time Keighley had reached the nozzle and thrown it up. "Hell, Tim," he growled, "do yuh want to drown 'em? Get yer ladders there, men!" he shouted. "Haul those fullahs out!"

The crew caught up their scaling-ladders and ran to the gap in the pier.

"They w'u'd, w'u'd they!" Noonan fumed. He shook his fist at the red-shirts that had rallied at a safe distance.

Keighley caught him by the shoulders and turned him round. "Take a joke, Tim!" he said curtly. "Take a joke. These ain't the days o' Silver Nine."

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He went down the ladder, and Noonan—with his coat half off and his helmet pushed back from his forehead—remained to swallow and stare after Keighley, in the posture of a man who had been egged on to a fight and then left and laughed at when his blood was up.

He understood that he had been made a fool of. He did not know that he had done worse than that for Dolger.

XVI

THE men whom Dolger had led down to the *Hudson* had been drawn from the squad that had been protecting the brewery; and he had taken the chance of getting them back to the building, with a powerful line of boat's hose, in time to recover any ground that the fire might have gained in their absence. Noonan's method of receiving them had been a deadly disarrangement of their plans. It left the brewery undefended; and it put Keighley's men at rescue work when they should have been stretching in their line.

They got a ladder down to Dolger; but he was too weak to do more than

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cling to it; and they had to bring a heaving-line from the boat, tie it under his arms, and hoist him to the pier with the aid of two of his own men, who buoyed him up in the water and underpropped him as he was dragged panting up the slant of broken timbers. He had hurt his hip. He was too weak to walk. He collapsed on the pier in a pool of trickle from his bedraggled uniform, and the water ran from his forehead in the fat pouches of his eyes, and he moaned, "Ach Gott! Ach Gott!" in a beard that dripped with salt water like a bunch of seaweed.

They left him there until they had rescued seven of his men who were clinging to piles or floating on planks under the pier; and these gathered about him, one by one, forlornly, wringing the water from their trousers, tak-

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ing off their boots to empty them, or vainly trying to wipe the smart of brine from their eyes with the cuffs of their shirts. Keighley looked them over sternly. "Don't you fullahs know no better'n to run into a stream like that? Do yuh want to get yerselves kille'd?"

"We didn't see it comin'," one of them protested.

"Comin'?" he said. "It was *you* that was comin'."

They muttered and looked back at the hole in the pier.

"Yuh'll get killed at some o' these fires, some o' these days, if yuh go runnin' into places full o' smoke this way, without lookin' where yuh're runnin'. The chief ought to know better. How're yuh feelin', chief?"

Dolger groaned, "De brewery! Stob her!"

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"Help him aboard there!" Keighley ordered. "Cast off an' run her up the pier further, Moore, an' ge' that line in!" The volunteers helped their limping officer aboard. "Y' ought to know better," Keighley grumbled. "Runnin' in blind like that! Hurry up there, boys!"

The guilty Noonan had hidden in the wheelhouse. Keighley saw him watching from the window, and grimly ordered the men to carry Dolger in there, too. While that was being done, the boat was run up past the gap in the pier and made fast again; and for the next half hour Keighley was too busy to think of Noonan or his victim.

The broadside of streams from the *Hudson* had checked the progress of the fire down the water front, and a single standpipe was sufficient to hold

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it now; but the roof of the brewery was flaming under a rolling plume of black smoke, and the excitement ashore rose to the confusion of a panic. Keighley, on the bulwarks, gathered together a herd of volunteers, and drove them with shouts to drag lines from the hose-box and stretch them up the pier. They tripped over their own feet, blundered with their hose-spanners, tried to screw the wrong nozzles on the lines, turned on the water before their couplings were tight, got in the way of the trained men, and were bruised and wetted, blinded, cursed and bewildered, like a crew of clumsy stage supers caught in the hurry of a "dark change." When they got their big line laid and the water turned into it, the force of the stream kicked them back as if they had been trying to hold a cannon; and it was

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only by virtue of the everlasting luck of the beginner that the plunging nozzle did not thresh the lives out of some of them. Keighley swore disgustedly, and sat down on the side of the boat.

The brewery was doomed in any case. He watched it burn.

While he was sitting there, the crest-fallen Noonan came up behind him, perspiring remorsefully, and wiping his red face in the crook of his elbow. "We got th' ol' Dutchman into trouble, Dan," he said.

Keighley snorted his indifference.

"The boys all work in the brew'ry. He says they'll blame him fer bein' out o' jobs."

Keighley spat. "It's up to him. It ain't up to me."

"His depaty's been in there, crowin' over 'm. He'll be gettin' elected to

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Dolger's place. . . . He didn't try to save the brew'ry. He says Dolger let the soap works burn a-purpose. . . . The whole dang thing's been botched."

"Sure it's been botched," Keighley said. "What'd yuh expect? They're too busy playin' politics to put out fires."

Noonan's mouth shut. He stroked his chin thoughtfully with a thumb and forefinger, looking down his nose. Then he went back to the wheelhouse and lit a cigar.

He did not come out again until the boat turned homeward, with the sun setting smoke-red over the hills of No-hunk. The wreck of Dolger's career stretched from the ruins of the soap works to the blackened shell of the brewery. He had been helped to his

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home by a squad of loyal officers; his deputy was wearing his white fire-hat; and, in the road that had marked his line of battle, the indignant citizens of Nohunk were planning a revolution in his fire-department.

Noonan watched them sadly from the taffrail. Dolger's woes lay heavy on him. Behind him Keighley said:

"Between the boys o' the soap-works fightin' the boys o' the brew'ry, an' Chief Dolger scrappin' with Deputy Hencks, there ain't much left o' Nohunk."

Noonan did not reply.

Keighley took a turn around the deck. When he came back to the stern, he said: "Them days is past fer us, Tim. We don't wear red shirts nowadays. We don't elect our Chief. We

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get a day's pay fer a day's work. An' we got no use fer politics."

"What d' yeh mean by that now?" Noonan cried. "Talk straight fer once in yer life, will yeh?"

"I mean," Keighley said, "that Jigger ner anti-Jigger makes no diff'rence to me. If a man does his work, I'll stan' by him. An' if he don't, I'll pound him till he does. That's the rule aboard this boat, an' it al'ys will be."

"Yeh're makin' a mistake," Noonan warned him, "a big mistake."

Keighley settled his collar. "Yuh better leave me to run me men in m' own way. Mind your politics, : ' leave me to me fires. Yuh're a good deal of a joke with a pipe yerself, Tim. Yuh'd better leave that to me."

XVI

NOONAN said no more; and when the *Hudson* had tied up, he went ashore with a non-committal, "Well, s'long Dan" that expressed nothing but reserve. Keighley saw him go, and returned, relieved, to the work of having the *Hudson* made ready for her next run.

"They're keepin' us busy," he said to Moore.

"They" were. In the space of three days, the boat had done duty at three fires; and the fire on the *Sachsen*, of the previous week, had been enough in itself to make the summer one that would be easily remembered. But now, as if to give the men a taste of both

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sorts of life in the department, the days that followed settled down into the duldest routine of barrack room inactivity. The jigger rang and rang again, but it never rang any of the lucky numbers that would give the *Hudson* exercise. "Nuthin' but blanks," "Shine" complained. "This's worse 'n playin' 'policy.' Gee, I wish we'd draw a number with a fire on it."

The engineer had work to do, fitting a sort of drain to carry off the water that condensed in the low-pressure cylinder. Keighley was kept interested by the rumors of bad blood between the Fire Commissioner and "the Boss"—or the Boss's creature, the Little Mayor. But the men had nothing but the shining of brasses and the washing of hose to occupy their few working moments, and nothing but the ex-

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hausted interest of newspapers and dominoes to pass their long idle hours. They did not lend any but a languid ear to the reports of the department intrigues, now that Keighley had fought the "Jiggers" to a standstill. They had decided to let that matter rest until their superiors took it up again.

And then, one warm morning, when "Shine" and Sturton were sitting on the deck of the *Hudson*, in the shade of the wheelhouse—eating apples which they had picked out of the scum of chips and driftwood under the boat's quarter—something happened that proved, in its final issue, to have a vital influence in ending the whole "Jigger" trouble, so far as the *Hudson* and its crew were concerned, although the actual incident itself involved only "Shine."

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He had been complaining of the life they had been leading. "I'm sick o' this. Sick o' the whole rotten bus'ness. Sick o' doin' time in this dang pen, like a convic'."

The boat was as hot as an ironclad, with her metal fittings and cement deck; but if "Shine" and Sturton went into the pierhouse with their fruit, they would have to divide it with the other members of the crew; and they had elected to endure the heat rather than lose the apples.

"Turk" knuckled the end of his crooked nose, turned over his apple with deliberation, and crunched off a fresh bite. "Whasmatterith it?" he asked thickly.

"It's rotten!" "Shine" growled. "*Rotten!* That's what's the matter with it. It's too much scrubbin' brasses

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—an' stan'in' watehes—an' playin' footy dominoes—an' havin' nuthin' to do."

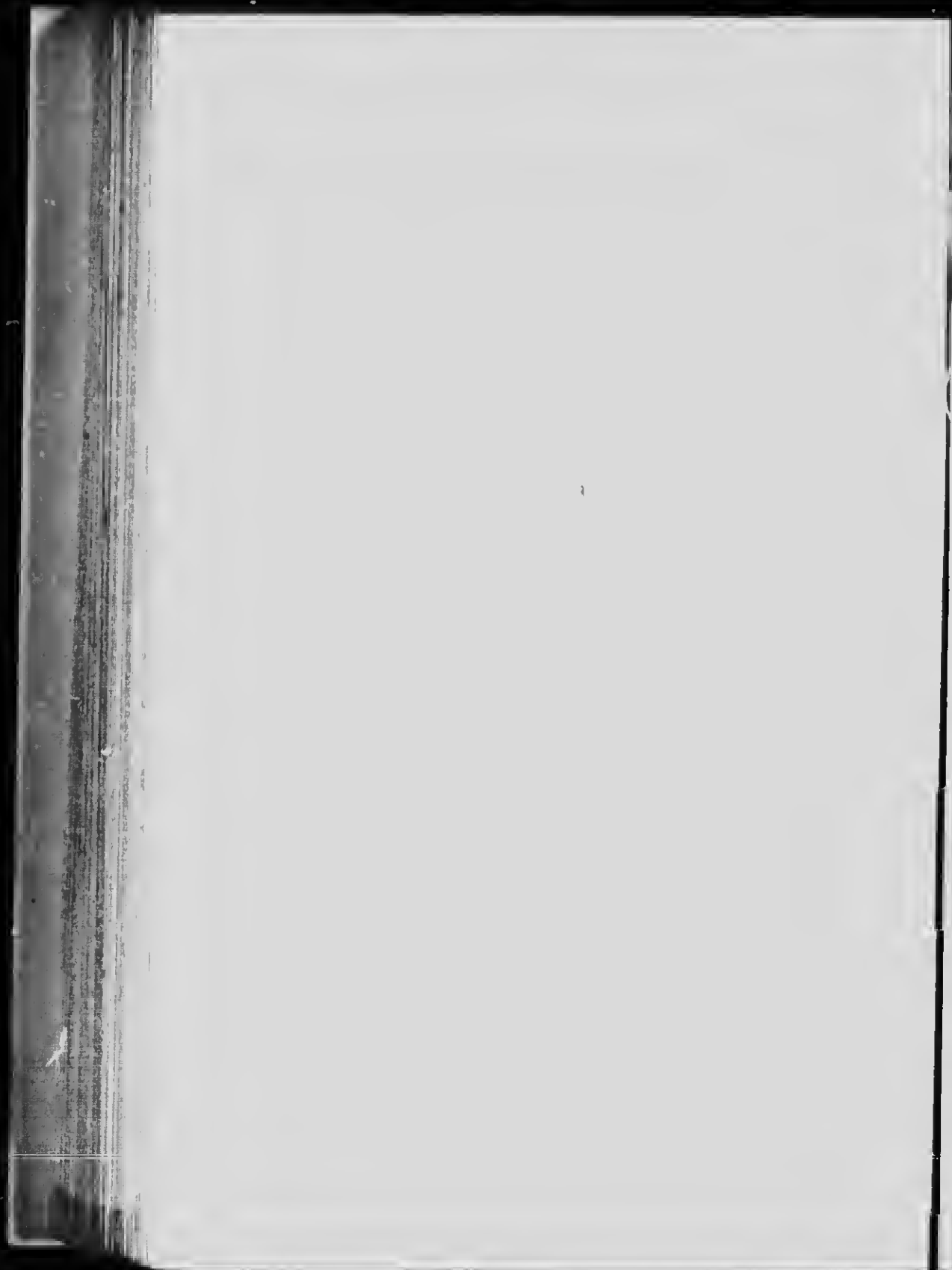
"It's better 'n truekin'," Sturton said—remembering the laborious days he had spent hooking paeking-eases and hoisting bales. "It's the easiest money I ever made."

"Money! What's the use o' money when yuh can't blow it in?" It was the day after pay-day, and "Shine" had his poeket full. "I'd sooner be deekin' on three a week." In the course of his varied career as boot-blaek, wharf-rat, Bowery boy and member of the "Con. Seully Assoeiation," he had once held a "spring line" on a Coney Island excursion boat. He remembered the cool breeze that had blown in a porthole of the forward eabin when the deekhands sat playing pedro there, of an afternoon.



"Over yuh go now!"

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He remembered midnights on the Bowery, when the boat had been tied up to her pier, and he had been free ashore with his month's wages in his pocket. "Yuh weren't chained up to a 'dog-house like this, all day an' night," he said.

Sturton grunted, unconvinced.

"Shine" chewed and swallowed sullenly, until his little puckered eyes set in the open stare of a cow revolving its cud. He smiled. He followed that expression with a scowl and bit into his apple; and, the memory of strong drink being a thirst in his mouth, the mild cider-juice of the bruised fruit came as an insipid aggravation to a longing palate. He flung the apple overboard. "If it was n't fer th' ol' woman," he said, "I'd chuck the damn job."

Sturton's jaw stopped. Whenever

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he had a nightmare, he dreamed that he was discharged from the department.

“What’d yuh *do*?”

“Do?” “Shine” cried. “I’d do anythin’. I’d go an’ make a pitch on Coney fer the summer.”

“Make a what?”

“Take a front—set up a show—fake ’em, fake ’em! All the suckers ain’t been stung yet. . . . An’ if I didn’t have the money fer that, I’d go boostin’ fer a start. I had fifteen boosters ’n under me onct. Youse guys that think th’ on’y way to collar the cush is to go sweat fer it, like niggers—yuh make me tired!”

“Turk” shook his head darkly.

“This ’s good enough fer mine.”

“Sure, it is,” “Shine” sneered.

“Yuh don’t know any better. Yuh’ve never *drew* any better. If yuh’d been

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with me an' Goldy Simpson when we had the front on Tilyou's Walk, we'd 'a' showed yuh life—life!" He polished another apple on his shirt sleeve and sank his teeth in it savagely. Sturton did not reply. They ate in silence.

"Shine" was barefooted. He had taken off his shoes to reach the apples, standing on a stringer that was awash. He drew his knees up to his chin now, to keep his feet within the narrow cover of the shade, and he sat like a monkey in a cage, looking over the bulwarks enviously at the free life on the open river.

When the steamboat *Leo* of the Coney Island fleet came paddling down stream towards him, he took her appearance at that moment as a particular spite of fate. The captain was at a window of the pilothouse; the first mate was standing over a group of deckmen who were

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hauling on the rope that raised a fender; a waiter leaned on the shutter of a forward gangway, idle. And "Shine" saw his past float by him, in the sunlight, like a vision.

He watched it biliously. From a port of the forward cabin a thin curl of smoke was drifting out, and he imagined a contented stoker lolling on the warm deck within, sucking the reed stem of a corn-cob pipe. He remembered a boat that had been set afire by the butt of a cigarette thrown overboard from an upper deck and carried by the wind, through that very port, into the ropes and rags and paint-pots of that cabin, he hoped the smoker in there, now, would start a blaze. He hoped the old tub would burn before his eyes.

"Gee!" he said. "He must be smokin' a Dutchman's pipe."

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When the steamer was abreast of them, Sturton suddenly jumped up. "That's a fire, ain't it?"

It was; and "Shine" came to his feet as if he had been lifted by the yell of derision with which he greeted the fact that it *was* a fire. "Hi-yi! *Ca-a-ap!* Mueka-hi! Ain't y' afire forrud?" He waved his arms and pointed. "Yuh're smokin' in the peak!"

Sturton put his hands to his cheeks and bellowed, "Smoke up in front!"

Their voices drew the other firemen from the pierhouse; and while these men shouted questions and "Shine" bawled replies, a cry was raised on the *Leo* and the passengers started a panic across her decks. Almost immediately, her whistle shrilled the repeated signal of distress; Captain Keighley ordered "Cast off, boys;" and "Shine" ran, bare-footed, to his duty.

XVII

IT proved to be a small fire in the excursion boat's stores, and the *Hudson* doused it with a single line of hose. But there was much smoke and more confusion in the bow of the steamboat; and when the *Hudson* drew off and left the crew of the *Leo* to swab down the wet decks, "Shine" was hidden in the forepeak of the steamer—behind a pile of cut rails that were used to ballast the nose of the boat—listening to the noises overhead like a boy playing truant.

No one knew he was there, except his friend Doherty, the ex-fireman, whom he had found on the lower deck of the *Leo*. "'S all right, Shorty," "Shine" whispered. "I been knocked out by the

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smudge, see? I fell down the hatch here, an' was bumped stiff. Make yerself scarce now, an' let one o' those deckers fin' me. I'll raise a holler in a minute."

Doherty retreated unobserved. When all was quiet again on the *Leo*, the men in the fore-castle heard an agonized moaning on the other side of the forward bulkhead, and came to "Shine's" aid with oaths of amazement. They raised him up the ladder and supported him, limping waddly, aft to the bar. He said in a voice that shook pathetically, "Have a gargle, boys, on me." And he said it with such an effect of unselfish thoughtfulness in pain that it won them all.

When Doherty returned forward, he found "Shine" the centre of a ring of admiring deckers who were "gargling"

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around him in all sympathy. One of them was rubbing his crippled side; another supported him by the arm. He was wincing heroically. "Come in, Shorty," he gasped. "What 'll yuh have? . . . That's all to the good, now, boys. I'm all right. Gi' me a beer." He leaned up against the bar and smiled engagingly. "This 's on me. Say, I pull out sixty-six plunks a month, an' no more chance to spend it 'an a savin's bank. What d' yuh think o' that? Give a man the hottest job in Little Ol' Ne' York, an' want to keep him on the dry! What's yours?"

They received his delicate witticisms with appreciative guffaws, and he beamed with the cordiality of his invitations to drink. He was flushed with the pride of the native who has returned to his old haunts, rich with the loot of the

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alien. "This 's on me," he kept repeating. "What'll yuh have?"

Soda fizzed, beer frothed, whiskey elueked in the neck of the bottle. The brown hands went over the bar in an eager seramble, and the fat barkeeper juggled with glasses, bottles, siphons and boxes of cigars like a stage magician. "Sure. . . . On the spring line. . . . Th' ol' *Cyrus*. . . . Have a cigar, then. . . . This 's on me."

Doherty, in the background, listened sourly to the laughter of the deckmen, until he saw the size of the roll of greenbacks which "Shine" drew from his trousers' poeket. Then he took a last hasty gulp of liquor and stood looking fixedly at the bottom of his empty glass. He put it down on the bar and elbowed his way to "Shine."

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“Have another, Shorty?”

“Naw. I’ve had enough.” He touched “Shine’s” elbow significantly and slid his eyes around in a sidewise stealthiness without moving his head. “Nittsy!” he said, out of the corner of his mouth.

“Shine” finished his glass, shook hands with the circle, and followed his friend to the gangway. “What’s up?”

Doherty seemed embarrassed. “Well, say,” he explained, under his breath, “they’re a gang o’ strong-arms. I was a-scared they’d get yuh loaded an’ shove yuh fer yer wad.”

“Shine” laughed. “I guess there’s no one in that bunch o’ ’bos could frisk me any.”

Doherty wriggled and grinned. “What’re yuh goin’ to do?”

“Me?” “Shine” leaned on the shut-

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ter of the gangway and spat at the water. "I'm goin' to Coney an' back."

The smell of the past was sweet in his nostrils—that indescribable smell of an excursion steamboat's lower deck—the bilgy smell of chill dampness, soiled paint and stale humanity. The churning of the paddle-wheels and the swish of water under the guard filled his ears with a remembered music. Hatless, coatless and in his bare feet, he took the sunshine on a guileless smile and watched the shores of Long Island gliding past in their old familiar way.

If he had not been blinded by the light and by his own generous emotions, he might have seen something suspicious below the manner of his former messmate, who peered at nothing with shaded eyes that shifted cunningly and a smile that came and went. But Do-

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herty talked in the voice of friendship, and "Shine" listened, without looking, basking in his own good nature.

They did not refer to the trouble with Captain Keighley. "Shine" felt himself guilty of having deserted from that quarrel, and avoided the mention of it. Doherty had long since concluded that the fireboat crew did not intend to avenge his injuries; and he was waiting for an opportunity to make the "quitters" suffer for having failed him.

He explained that after he "quit handlin' freight" for the Baltic-American line, he had gone "cappin' fer a con man that was workin' the hucks" on Coney—which is to say, he had been the confederate in a shell game. He had hoped to start a "graft" of some sort on the Island himself, but—as he put it plaintively—"a dip went through me

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fer all I'd put down, one night when I was paddin' it in a doss-house on the Bow'ry."

"Shine" laughed good-naturedly at this tale of another man's misfortunes, as tickled with the sound of his Coney thieves' slang as an exiled Highlander who hears his native Scotch.

Doherty licked his lips. "D' yuh remember Goldy Simpson?"

"Do I?" "Shine" cried. "Me an' Pikey Moffatt—"

"Goldy's back at Coney."

"G' wan! No!"

"Sure. He was up town yesterday lookin' fer a ballyhoo man."

"No!" "Shine" laughed immensely. "By —, I'd like to see him. I'd like t' ask him if he remembers the time me an' Pikey Moffatt—"

"Why don't yuh?" Doherty cut in.

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“Yuh e’u’d go back by trolley just as well as not.”

“Shine” looked doubtfully at his feet.

“Borry a pair o’ kicks an’ a hat in the foc’sle.”

“Shine” hesitated.

“Come on,” Doherty cried. “Let’s blow off up the island together. I’m loo-in’ fer a job boostin’ er ballyhoooin’ er somethin’.”

It was the voice of temptation sweetly tuned to “Shine’s” own inclination. He could, in fact, get back to the fire-boat more quickly by rail than by water; and even if he did not—if he “stopped over” long enough to call on “Goldy” and the “gang”—the *Leo* would carry back word of his accident in the fore-peak, and he could invent more excuses to explain his farther delay.

He said, “Let’s get the boots.” And

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when the *Leo* tied up at her pier on the Coney Island beach, he was helped ashore by Doherty and a deckhand who had lent him a hat, a coat and a pair of shoes for two dollars.

XVIII

THE Coney Island that they landed on is gone now. It was a shouting gypsy fair of side shows, beer gardens, dance halls, chowder tents, shooting galleries and unsavory "joints." It was not a sweet resort, but "Shine" walked through it, like an old graduate through the corridors of his college, fondly reminiscent. He laughed at the "ballyhoo man" drawing the crowd to a booth with his sword-swallowing and his fire-eating. He listened appreciatively to the art of a "spieler" praising a "performance inside;" and he turned to smile on a "booster" who put a shoulder behind him and gently impelled him towards the ticket office. He sniffed the

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odor of steaming frankfurters and fried crabs. He stood grinning before a merry-go-round that ground out a deafening cacophany from a German organ. And Doherty, beside him, had to stand and listen, grin and comment, with a hypocritical pretence of delight—working his toes secretly in his broken shoes, meanwhile, to ease the itch of his impatience to get on.

They got on, at last, to a saloon which Doherty had been heading for. It was a pine "front" with a sign that pictured a beer glass as big as a pail, marked "My Size! Five Cents!" They went past the bar to the deserted little drinking room beyond it, and sat down at a table beside a door which "Shine" did not notice—and Doherty did. The walls were covered with colored tissue papers, cut and folded in fans and cir-

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cles, and with printed invitations to the public not to forget the "receptions" of some half-dozen "associations." These were a "Welcome Home" to "Shine"; and he read them almost sentimentally while Doherty was gone to speak to the "barkeep" who was a "frien'" of his.

When he came back with two glasses of beer, "Shine" received his glass with a "Here's lookin' at yuh" that was warm. He drank a deep libation, open-throated, without tasting. He put the glass down and smiled. "Bum booze," he said, clucking over a bitterness that burned his tongue.

Doherty kept his snub nose in his "schooner."

"Shine" looked up at an "invitation" above him, and drank again to quench a sudden heat in his mouth.

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"Say," he said thickly, "I don't like this beer."

"Mine's all right," Doherty assured him. "I'll get y' another."

Before he returned, "Shine" had drained the first glass. He took the second unsteadily, grinning at Doherty to cover the fact that he could not think of what he had intended to say. He drank thirstily, put down his glass and blinked. He had become conscious of a great lapse of time. It seemed to him that he had been silent for an hour.

He began to talk very busily, but without any great success in saying anything; and to lubricate his difficulty in articulation he drank and drank. "How's that?" Doherty asked him, with each successive glass, and "Shine" assured him—as well as he could—that it was "A' right a' right."

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"How's *that*?" Doherty asked at last, exultingly; and his voice came to "Shine" as a thin rustle of hoarse sound. The wall seemed to be bellying like a curtain in a draught. "I'm fu'," he said, and laughed tipsily.

The room had begun to swim around him, and he drank again, to steady it. It revolved faster and faster. He shut his eyes and tried to sit tight, but could not keep his balance. The motion dizzied him. He rested his head on the table, feeling very tired and very sleepy; and he decided that he would remain there until the world around him returned to a state of rest.

When he woke again, in a semi-stupor—it seemed only a few minutes later—he felt someone kicking the soles of his bare feet. He was lying on the floor of a room, stripped to his undershirt and

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trousers. He could not see Doherty anywhere. A stranger was saying, "Look-a-here, 'Shine.' That partner o' yours, Doherty, was in to see me this mornin'. He said yuh wanted a job ballyhooin'. He said yuh 'd do me a barefoot dance fer the price of a pair o' boots. Is that right?"

He grinned a grin of malice that showed the gold in all his huge teeth; and "Shine" recognized "Goldy" Simpson.

XIX

GOLDY SIMPSON!—proprietor of the “Alhambra of Mystic marvels and Persian Beauty Show” that had a large and gaudy entrance on one of the Island’s “avenues” and an inconspicuous exit on a neighboring walk. Its promises of entertainment were as lavish as the paint on its front canvas, and its fulfilment of them as shabby as the bleached pine of its back door. Its whole staff, in fact, was employed in drawing the public past its ticket office. Once inside the booth, you found nothing but three scrawny “Persian Beauties” posed on a curtained stage; the eloquent Simpson rose to make more promises of what was to

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be seen, for another payment, still further in, where the police could not interfere; and the "boosters" led those who paid, down a dark passage, to the exit—and laughed at them in the street.

It was to this cave of robbers that "Shine" was led—led by the promise that if he assisted the "show" for the afternoon, he would be paid off at night with 25 cents for car fare, a pair of old shoes, a cap and a coat in which to return to town. He had to accept the offer; there was nothing else to be done; and he was in no condition to think of anything else even if there had been anything.

They dressed him to represent a Hindoo snake-charmer, in a white cotton undershirt, baggy chintz trousers, Turkish bath-slippers and a turban made of several twisted towels. Still half-stupe-

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fied by Doherty's "knockout drops," he was shoved out on a platform before the "Alhambra," heard muffled voices around him, saw upturned faces below him in a sort of crowded nightmare, and went out into the sunlight and came back into the dark, without understanding the orders he obeyed—dazed and sullen, and all the time groping in the uproar of a drugged brain for a thought that moved somewhere in the obscurity every time Doherty's face flashed across his memory.

He could not recall what had happened. He knew that he had been with Doherty—but that was all.

When the costumed staff of the "Alhambra" sat down, inside the booth, to a supper that had been brought in from a neighboring New England kitchen—to save the necessity of changing clothes

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and going out to an eating house—"Shine" found himself with Simpson, Simpson's wife, who was the cashier of the ticket office, a boy called "Butts," who turned the crank of the mechanical piano, and three flaxen-wigged "Queens of the Harem" wrapped in faded dressing robes. Frankfurters, sandwiches and beer had been laid out like a picnic on a trestle-table of rough boards. In the dim light that filtered through a dirty skylight overhead, the powdered shoulders of the women were wanly white and their unpowdered hands were *not*. "Shine" sat humped over his food, unable to eat.

Several times he looked up with a momentary blink of intelligence, and then frowned about him in a helpless return of his stupor, his head aching as if it would split. He put his hand to his

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forehead and cleared his throat. He asked, in a husky and uncertain voice: "Where's . . . Doherty?"

Simpson was enjoying the situation. "I guess he's blowed. I ain't seen him since mornin'."

"What'd he tell yuh?"

"He said yuh was over at Timmin's lookin' fer a job."

"Shine" looked up under his eyebrows with a bloodshot glower. "He sloughed me fer ev'rythin' I had on me."

"I guess you're right," Simpson said. "He looked like he had."

"Shine" put his elbows on the table and rested his head in his hands. Simpson winked at his wife. The Queens of the Harem smiled appreciatively, but with care—on account of their "make-up."

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After a long silence, "Shine" said weakly, "I got to get back to the boat, I'm off without leave. Gi' me a pair o' boots an' le' me go."

"Sure thing," Simpson promised. "There's a fullah promised he'd be here t'night. I'll let yuh go as soon 's he comes."

"I got to go now."

"Long way to walk—in bare hoofs, too. Better work out yer contrac'."

"Shine" tried to focus a wavering eye on him. "Yuh're in this with Doherty," he said. "Yuh damn double-crosser. Yuh dirty back-capper!"

Simpson replied, with meaning, "D' yuh mind the time yuh handed me over to Pikey Moffat? Think about it." He got up from the table. "Think about it," he said as he went out.

His wife brushed the crumbs from the

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lap of her flowered satin evening gown, and followed him. The beauties in the bath robes trailed off to their dressing-room. The boy began to gather up the beer mugs.

He looked commiseratingly at "Shine." "Wish yuh had *my* job," he said. "I dreamt I was a music box las' night, an' they wound me up by the arm. I got a cramp in 't this mornin', an' he says he'll dock me ten cents fer slowin' down to rub it."

"Shine" did not speak.

The boy looked after the Queens of the Harem. "Wish I was a woman," he said, "an' didn't have to do nuthin' but look picturesquew."

He sighed. He pinched off the lighted end of his cigarette, put the butt in his pocket, and went out, grumbling, with the beer mugs.

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"Shine" remained hunched over the table, staring at nothing and slowly gathering venom. When he went out to the platform, he was full of it, bitter with it, almost indeed sober and clear-headed with it.

XX

“**L**ADIES an’ gen’leman,” Simpson announced, “I’m from Texas. I’m from Texas where they val-yoo frien’ship more *than* money. An’ what I’m goin’ to tell yuh is between *man an’ man.*” He straightened up with dignity. “I’m the *pro-prietor* o’ this show. I’m monarch of all I survey.”

He waved his hand from the display of his wife’s shoulders in the ticket office to the oil canvases of the Indian nautch girls, the skeleton man, the “Wizard of the West,” the “Demon Diavolo” eating fire, and the “Modern Samson” lifting ton weights—to the three Queens of the Harem, sitting on

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the platform with "Shine," under the flare of a gasoline "torch"—to the curtained door that led into the "Alhambra of Mystic Marvels and Persian Beauty Show."

He screamed with a sudden inconsequent passion: "I don't hire men to come out here an' lie to yuh! No! I'm tryin' to make an hones' livin' fer myself an' the fines' comp'ny o' performers that ever appeared together under one management on Coney Island!" He wiped his forehead. He lowered his voice. "An' to tell youse the truth, boys, it's the toughest proposition I ever went up against."

It was a Saturday night, and the Island walks were crowded. "Shine" was looking down on a throng of white faces and eyes that shone in the light. They laughed.

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“I know!” Simpson cried. “Yuh’ve been faked. Yuh’ve been payin’ good money to see a lot o’ ham-fatters an’ chair-warmers—a lot o’ stiffs that couldn’t get hired fer a supper-show up in the city. Ain’t that right?”

One of his “boosters” in the back of the crowd shouted, “That’s what’s the matter!”

Simpson threw up his hands. “That’s it! That’s it! An’ because I don’t come out here an’ promise to give yuh more ’n I got, yuh don’t believe me. An’ I got the bes’ show on the Island, barrin’ an’ exceptin’ *none!* A show that on’y costs one dime to witness—an’ it’s worth a dollar if it’s worth a cent!”

He made a sign to the platform. “Shine” and the three beauties in tights and tinsel stood up. One of the latter

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was chewing gum with a pensive movement of the under jaw.

"First an' foremost, let me tell yuh," he said, "I got Kulder, the Hindoo snake-charmer, sword-swallower, an' fire-eater." He pointed to "Shine." "Bein' a native o' Calcutter, where he was employed by the Hindoo fire-department, he was kicked out three years ago by the Durbar because he wouldn't turn water on a blaze. No! He wanted t' eat the flames!"

The crowd grinned. "Shine" scowled.

Simpson went on: "He'll drink anythin' from boiled bay rum to knock-out drops. He'll walk barefoot from here to the Batt'ry to get a look at a fire-boat. He's the simplest an' sulk-iest an' treacherest damn fool of a Hin-

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doo that ever put up a game on a partner. An' he don't understan' a word yuh say!"

"Shine" muttered to himself. Simpson launched out into a glowing description of the Beauties of his Persian Harem. He could not bring them all out on the platform. The police, he whispered, would not let him. But excepting the secret palace of the Sultan of Turkey, there was nothing to equal it on this side of Madagascar! Nuthin'!

As for the canvases overhead, they spoke for themselves. They represented "truthfully an' without *ex-aggeration*" a small part of the mystic marvels to be seen on the inside for the small price of a dime, ten cents. "A dime! A dime!" he cried. "All free fer a dime!"

The boy struck up a staggering mel-

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ody on the mechanical piano. "Shine" and the Beauties retreated through the curtains. The "boosters" began to shove the crowd in towards the ticket office in a pretence of eagerness to get good seats for themselves, confiding to their neighbors that they had heard it was "the goods, all right, inside." They paid and passed in; and at least a score of gulls followed them with more or less doubtfulness.

That was the first "push," and it was Simpson's habit to make two "pushes" before he gave his performance.

While he was inside, waiting for a new audience to gather out in front, "Shine" accosted him again. "Are yuh goin' to gi' me them boots?"

"Sure thing," he promised airily. "Soon 's I get good an' ready."

"Shine" nodded and went back to his

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place behind the curtains. Simpson saw nothing new in the fireman's manner. He had been taunting "Shine" all afternoon with platform insults—which "Shine" had endured in silence because he had not understood them—and Simpson had mistaken stupor for meekness.

The net was spread for the second "push" in the same manner as for the first, though in briefer language, for there was now an impatient roomful inside, listening.

"An' here," Simpson cried, "we have the famous Hindoo snake-charmer. A pure Brahma—look at his feet. This man, ladies an' gen'lemen, lives on dope! He wears no socks. Why? Why does he wear no socks? *Be-cause* he swapped them this mornin' fer a quart o' knockout drops! While 'n under th'

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influence o' that noxious drug, he'll swally anythin'—live fire, nails, carpet tacks, jollies er anythin' else yuh throw into him. He—”

“Are yuh goin' to gi' me them boots?” “Shine” growled.

The crowd heard him and drew in closer, scenting trouble. Simpson heard him and veered off. “An' next we have three ladies from th' Imperial Harem o' Madagascar—”

“Are yuh goin' to gi' me them boots?”

Simpson raised his voice to drown the laughter. “Three o' the faires' flowers in Eastern womanhood! On th' inside we have no less 'n twenty-seven—”

“He's a liar!” “Shine” shouted to the crowd. “He's a liar. He's got nuthin' at all inside. He's a liar an' a fakir. He promised me a pair o'

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boots! He's a liar an' a fakir! He's
—”

Simpson leaped on him. The three frightened Beauties jumped screaming into the arms of the crowd. In another minute the whole front of the “Alhambra” was shaking with the uproar of a riot.

“Shine” was a Bowery fighter. He turned in Simpson's clutch and threw him, and while the “boosters” were forcing their way to the platform to aid their employer, he pounded Simpson in a fury. It was impossible to separate him from his struggling victim, so they dragged him from the platform, and Simpson with him; and then some of the roughest in the crowd raised a cry of “Fair fight there! Fair fight!” and attacked the boosters. In the midst of it

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The blaze, caught at close range, seemed to snuff out
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a gang of Coney thieves made a raid on the ticket office, and Mrs. Simpson's wild yells rose above the tumult in a shrill appeal for help.

There followed a free fight and a general scramble for the gate receipts.

It lasted until the policeman on that beat called out the reserves to clear the street; and when these turned their attention to the cause of the disorder, a solitary gasoline torch, above the ballyhoo platform, shone on the deserted wreck of the "Alhambra" front. The boosters had made their escape by the back way. "Butts" had deserted his piano, and was sitting in the New England Kitchen greedily inhaling the smoke of a cigarette. The Beauties of the Harem were whispering together in their dressing-room; and one of them

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had an air of inward apprehension natural to a young woman who had swallowed her chewing gum.

Mrs. Simpson was in the back room, bathing her husband's face. "Shine," alone in the Hall of Mystic Marvels, dressed in his own trousers and a coat and cap that belonged to "Butts," received the police with a battered grin.

"'S all right," he said. "A gang o' strong arms tried to rush the ticket office. I guess they got away with ev'rythin' but this." He showed a torn five-dollar bill. "The boss's in the back."

He pointed the way to them. When they came out again, with another version of the trouble, he had disappeared.

XXI

LATE that night he returned to the pierhouse of the *Hudson* limping, with his arm in a sling, his face bruised and an eye blackened. "Turk" Sturton, whose watch it was, received him without sympathy. "Cap'n wants to see yuh," he said sternly. "Where've yuh been?"

"Shine's" face expressed all the bitterness of a soul that had found no relief in its curses. "Wait!" he said. "Jus' *you* wait!"

He went into Keighley's office. The captain put aside a newspaper that he had been reading, and looked him over. "Well?"

"Shine" moistened his lips and began

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his explanations. They were guiltily ingenious. He had fallen down a hatch in the *Leo* and had lain unconscious until the steamer was half way to Coney. Then some deckmen in the forecastle had heard him groaning and had come to his rescue. He had been badly shaken up but not seriously hurt, and he had decided to hurry back to the *Hudson* by trolley instead of waiting for the *Leo* to make her return trip. He borrowed some clothes and went ashore, but as he was hastening up one of the board walks towards the street-car line, he was stopped by a number of men who were disputing about a cane which one of them had "ringed with one o' them rings that yuh toss at eanes in a 'Cane-yuh-ring-is-the-cane-yuh-get' graft." And they had demanded that he decide whether the cane had been "ringed" or

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not. The ring was resting on the knob of the cane, being too small to fall down over it. It was a "faked-up" dispute. They were a "gang o' strong arms," and when they got him in among them, they started to "go through" him. He put up a fight. They "got all over" him, knocked him down, gave him a black eye, and took his money. He had had to walk back from Coney. He—

"That'll do," Keighley cut in. "Take that sling off yer arm. Yuh can't come any spiels like that on me."

"S'welp me, cap, I—"

"Cut it out, now, I tell yuh. Yuh've been drunk. Yuv've been off duty ten hours without leave. Yuh've either got to gi' me a straight story er walk the carpet at Headquarters."

"Shine" swallowed and looked down at his feet. He was calculating that

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Acting-Chief Moran would be lenient with a "Jigger."

"Yuh've been havin' things pretty much yer own way around here," Keighley said. "This's where yuh take a drop. The Commissioner's out, see? He quit this afternoon. Youse fullahs 'er goin' to do what *I* say after this. If yuh go up to Headquarters, yuh don't come back. Moran won't save yuh. He's got all he can do to save his own neck, now."

"Shine" looked at the captain, and recognized that his game was up. "Twasn't my fault," he said. "It was Doherty's."

"Doherty! What'd Doherty have to do with it?"

"The damn dip! He done me up," he said—and plunged into an incoher-

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ent and many-cursed account of what had happened.

Keighley heard him in silence. When Doherty's part in the affair was made plain, the captain "sized up" the situation with the frown of a chess-player studying the board, and said "Ummm" as he saw his play. "Shine" finished, humble and submissive. Keighley said, "Go to yer bunk."

It is the tradition of the department that a captain shall enforce discipline in his company without sending his men to Headquarters on every trifling charge that he has against them. Keighley watched "Shine" out, snorted contemptuously through his nose, reached for the newspaper again, and returned to the column that reported the Fire Commissioner's resignation. He had

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"Shine" where he "wanted" him, as he would have said. And he had his whole company in the hollow of his hand.

"Shine" knew it. The "Jiggers" knew it. "It'll be off to the goose-pastures fer ours all right," Cripps said, discussing the situation with "Shine." "The chief'll get back, now, an' if he don't find a way to break us, he'll ship us off to the Bronx. I don't care a damn anyway," he added in feeble defiance.

"Ner me!" "Shine" clenched his hand. "I'm lookin' fer Doherty. If they kick me out o' the department, I'll find him all the quicker. An' I want youse fullahs to keep yer eyes skinned fer him. Jus' tell me where he's workin'. That's all! I'll do the rest."

Cripps swore plaintively. "After us fightin' ol' Clinkers fer him, too."

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"An' fer the rest o' them," "Shine" cried. "They've played us fer suckers—Moran an' the whole dirty gang. They've used us. An now when they're afraid o' fallin' down, they'll chuck us. That's all we'll get out o' the 'Jigger' bus'ness. Yuh'll see." He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand; he was almost "drooling" with disgust and bitterness. "Never mind. If I ever get ahold o' Doherty!" he promised himself.

There is nothing persists among these men as an enmity does. A man who has been wronged sees the scar of the injury as a mark of inferiority on him, and his pride in himself is never satisfied until he has been able to "get even," until he has proved himself the equal of his enemy by returning the hurt in kind. "Shine" could not even consider his

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case in solitude without suffering. When he was among companions, he could not think of Doherty without breaking out in new threats of vengeance, as if he would give a sort of promissory note against his debt of hatred. He asked everywhere for news of Doherty. His first day off he spent in searching Coney, with his hands clenched ready in his pockets. When he heard that Doherty had been seen about the docks, he spent hours at the pierhouse windows watching the river traffic, and took his weekly holiday lounging about the waterfront with the instinctive patience of a beast of prey. By the time a month had passed, the desire of revenge had become a sort of subconscious habit that affected his actions without disturbing his thought. He went about his work as of old, but

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silently, as self-contained as a man with a great ambition. He knew that if he could wait long enough he could get his man. He was prepared to wait a lifetime.

Then, one day, two things happened: Chief Borden came back to his place in the department and "Shine" heard that Doherty had been seen working as a freight-handler again on the Baltic-American wharves. At meal hour "Shine" did not go to his dinner; he hurried home to change his uniform, and posted off to the Baltic-American sheds—and he was denied an entrance by the wharf watchman. Since the fire on the *Sachsen* the rule had been strictly enforced that no stranger should be admitted to the company's piers without a card from the office. "Shine" did not care to show the metal fire-badge on his

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suspender; it was not a case for an official appearance. He returned to the *Hudson* hungry but full of hope. He could wait for his day off, waylay Doherty as the longshoremen left their work in the evening, and mark him for all time.

As it turned out, he did not have to wait for his day off. He waited only two days. On the third day the impossible happened.

An alarm of fire was rung in from the Baltic-American piers.

It found Chief Borden closeted with Captain Keighley when the call came. Under the eye of the head of the department, the crew took their places with an easy alertness and no confusion. The chief followed them aboard; the lines were cast off; Keighley nodded an order to the pilot; and the boat drew out into

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the stream with as little show of haste as a fast express pulling out from a railway platform on the tick of the appointed second.

The sullen glow of a sunset was smoldering dully over the Jersey shore; and New York was piled up to face it, a Gibraltar of brick and stone, twinkling with its lighted windows and gay with the blown plumes of steam from its roofs. A stiff breeze from the north drove the waves against the bow of the *Hudson* and hummed in the guys of her funnel. Keighley and the Chief, facing the bow with their backs to the wheelhouse, their chins sunken in their collars, were bent against the rush of air like a pair of old and deaf cronies, their hands behind them, their heads together as they talked.

“It was about a man named Doh-

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erty," Keighley was explaining reluctantly. "You remember him, I guess. Some o' the men didn't like it when I got him broke. An' they made a little trouble fer me—off an' on."

"He was a 'Jigger,' wasn't he?"

"Yes."

"How about that fire on the *Sachsen*? Didn't Doherty figure in that?"

"Well, I saw him there. He was doin' 'longshore-work on her. He might've been in it. I don't know."

"Didn't they stack the deal on you there?"

"I think they did. I don't know. They got foolin' with a pierhouse blaze while I was down in her hold. . . . I tell yuh how it is, chief: it's all over. They're attendin' to bus'ness. Yuh needn't be a-seared of any of 'em in this comp'ny."

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Keighley's tone was apologetic and conciliatory. It seemed traitorously so to the chief. "A-scared be damned!" he said. "I got to make *them* a-scared of *me*. Who was at the head of the game here? Moore?"

Keighley answered, "The man that was at the head of it—he's lef' the comp'ny."

The chief darted a black look at Keighley under the peak of his cap. "No one's left this boat since that fire. I looked her up."

"No," Keighley admitted, unabashed. "But he's left off makin trouble."

"Now listen to me, Dan," Borden broke out. "I've come back to the department and I'm counting up my friends. Those that ain't with me are against me. That's the way I look at it. . . . You know as well as I do

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that if I don't pound these men, they'll think I'm afraid of them—and they'll get to work and knife me."

"Well—that's true, too," Keighley reflected. He glanced up at the Jersey shore and down at the deck again. "I wish yuh'd leave them be, though, chief. I got the best crew in the department, now."

The chief shook his head. "They didn't leave *me* be. I can't let up on *them*. You know what they'd think."

"Well," Keighley said, looking out over the river, "I'll tell yuh. The man that was at the head of it—" He blinked the water from his eyes and peered into the wind—"in this crew—" He raised his arm slowly and pointed. "What's that?"

Through the traffic of ferries, car-floats and lighters that crowded the

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shore, he could see a big freighter drifting down the piers with a flotilla of tugs about her. "What's the matter? Is she afire?"

The chief watched her. "Looks like it, don't she?"

There was no answer. He turned to see that Keighley had left him; and he followed back to the wheelhouse, where he found the captain standing at the pilot's elbow with the glasses at his eyes.

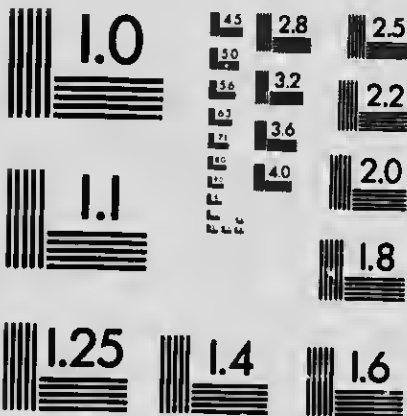
"It's a Baltie-American boat, all right—the *Hessen*," Keighley said. "No fire ashore. They pulled her out of her dock, I guess. I don't see much smoke on her. Lay us alongside, Tom."

And the chief, mentally putting aside his feud with the "Jiggers" for the time, said: "They're keeping it under hatches. Gi' me the glasses. . . . It's in one of her after holds."



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XXII

THE *Hessen* had been loading with a miscellaneous cargo that included everything from cotton to baby carriages and wild animals. She had seven cargo holds, each four decks deep; and when a smell of smoke was discovered in the depths of her fifth hold, the wild animals were already stored on the 'tween decks of that hold, with the baggage and the bunks for the keepers on the decks below. To save the animals from being smothered in the smoke, the hatch of the second deck had been covered with double tarpaulins; live steam had been turned in on the smolder; an alarm of fire had been sent out for the fire-boat; and the captain

OLD CLINKERS

had whistled for tugs to tow him out from the pier—for the fire that had spread from the *Sachsen* to the wharves had taught the officers of the line to isolate their burning boats.

When Keighley and his men came up their ladders to the main deck, the first officer of the *Hessen* received them with a hurried explanation of the situation, the frightened animals roaring a chorus in accompaniment from below.

“Can’t you hoist out the cages and let us open up?” the chief asked, when he arrived.

“No place to hoist them to,” Keighley said, “unless we put back to the pier.”

“Well, if we only cut a hole in the hatch and pump her hold full of water, you’ll lose all the cargo in the bottom, won’t you?”

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The first officer stroked his brown, German beard. "T'e beasts . . . are . . . more costly."

"There's three barb'ry lions, he says," Keighley explained rapidly, "an' two trucks o' nine trained leopards, an' some big gorillas an' half a circus goin' back to Hagen—what's-his-name, in Hamburg. We'll have to flood her down without openin' up. Smoke chokes them brutes off like kittens."

They stood beside the open hatch, in the fading light, and looked down into the dark cargo room. They could see faintly the ends of the box cages in which the animals were penned; and they could hear, *not* faintly, the uproar of a panic-stricken menagerie frenzied by the smell of fire. They could not see the deck below, though the hatch that led to it was open. Keighley

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sniffed. "It's sackin'." He turned to his men. "Get yer axes. Bring yer lamps. Couple up the six-inch line."

They turned back to the bulwarks, shoving aside the sailors. There was the noise of a scuffle, the cry of an angry oath—and a man ran across the deck and dodged behind the steam-winch that stood beside the hatch. He was pursued by a helmeted fireman who came cursing.

"Here!" Keighley caught the fireman by the shoulder as he passed. "What're yuh doin'."

It was "Shine." He cried, "That's Doherty. That's the damn bug that—Nab 'm, Turk." He struggled to get free of Keighley's grip, swearing like a street gamin. "Yuh double-crosser!" he yelled at Doherty. "Yuh dirty back-capper! Let me at 'm."

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Keighley turned to Lieutenant Moore. "Bring that man here," he said.

But Doherty did not wait to be surrounded. He leaped to the open hatch, caught the rung of the iron ladder and swung down into the hold.

"What's he doing here?" the chief asked.

"He was loadin'," someone answered.

"Haul him up out o' that," Keighley ordered.

"Shine" broke for the hatchway, with two of the men at his heels. He was half way down the ladder when Doherty's voice from below threatened: "The first man 'at comes down here, I'll let the cats loose on him."

"Go on," Keighley said grimly. "Bring 'm up. We don't want any more *Sachsen* games played on us here."

They went. But they did not go far.

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"Shine" had no more than jumped down among the cages when a shrill squealing rose in the hatch. A yell from "Shine" topped it with a startling note of fright; and up the ladder, over the men on the rungs, there came a swarm of monkeys, biting and fighting like rats as the men tried to beat them off, and clinging to arms and legs, shrieking and chattering, when the men, retreating, began to clamber up. They poured out, gibbering, on the deck and put the crew to flight. Then they scattered in all directions, up the derrick to the top-tackle, and up the housework to the higher decks. And when "Shine" came up the ladder, with the last little marmoset hugging his neck, the main deck was empty, the men were laughing shamefacedly on the bulwarks, and Keighley was bellowing down to the

OLD CLINKERS

Hudson for two lines of small hose.

"All right," he said. "We'll queer that game."

"Leave him alone," the chief ordered. "Look after that fire."

"That's what we did on the *Sachsen*," Keighley replied, "an' we ended up in a hole." He added, in a swift aside: "All right, chief. I want to show yuh somethin'. That's Doherty—the man the 'Jiggers' tried to knife me fer. I'm goin' to send after 'm the four jiggers that's left in the crew. I want yuh to see fer yerself about how much o' the Jigger bus'ness there *is* in my comp'ny. I'll take the other men down after the fire."

The chief considered a moment, and let his silence give consent. Keighley pushed back his helmet from his fore-

OLD CLINKERS

head and turned to his men, his lips shut tight on a smile.

"Here, Moore," he called to his lieutenant, "I'll look after the fire down there. I want *you* to take charge o' that fullah Doherty an' see he don't put up any games on us when we're 'n under. Here you," he called to "Shine", "an' you," to Cripps, "an' you," to another Jigger, "go with the loot'nt. Better take a line er two, in case he lets any more monkeys out on yuh. Get a move on now. Take yer lamps. Come on, men. Hurry up with that six-inch line."

The firemen carried their hose over to the hatch. When the lines were coupled and stretched in, "Shine" said to Moore, "Le' me go ahead, will yuh?"

Moore understood that he was eager

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to wipe out the disgrace of his first retreat. "Go on," he said.

"Shine" slung the lantern over his arm, took the pipe across his shoulder, and started down.

He was in the middle of the ladder when Doherty called out to him, from the roaring darkness of the 'tween deck: "Go on down below an' atten' to yer fire, now. If any o' youse tries to come in on this deck, I'll turn the whole damn circus loose."

"Shine" did not reply. He swung in to the deck and held up his lantern. Two big gorillas were watching from separate cages on either side of him, their teeth shining under curled lips, glaring at the light. He put down his lantern and poir'ed the nozzle like a gun.

Doherty threatened, "Here goes!"

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"Tell 'em to start the water,"
"Shine" cried to Cripps who was
behind him. He heard Doherty knock-
ing the pin out of a cage door, and he
backed into the ladder.

"Sick 'em," Doherty yelled; and
"Shine" knew, by the direction from
which the voice came, that Doherty was
safe on top of a cage.

Then, down the passageway between
the cages—in the dim halo that lay out-
side the ring of light from the lantern—
"Shine" saw a pair of flaming eyeballs
approaching him. He clutched the
empty nozzle. A black leopard crept
up and crouched at the edge of the light,
its tail beating on the deck. Behind it
he saw another. A third sneaked in be-
side them.

"Start yer water!" he called huskily.
Doherty yelled, "Sick 'em!"

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The leopards snarled. The nozzle shook in "Shine's" hands. His jaw had stuck, open-mouthed. He could not keep his eyes focused, and he blinked desperately, going "blind" with fear. "Wa-a—"

The hose stiffened; the nozzle kicked up. With a cry between a shout and a groan, he turned the shut-off valve and let loose a full stream that struck the deck in front of the leopards and scattered them as if it had been boiling water. He yelled, "Wh-rr-ah! Damn yuh! Cripps! Crippsey!"—and slashed the water into the huddled gorillas and stamped beside the lamp, bent double, like an Indian in a fire dance, whooping.

A terrific uproar broke loose among the animals. "Shine" tugged on the hose and dragged it in, drenching every-

OLD CLINKERS

thing, cursing gloriously. "Come out o' that!" he yelled. "Yeh sneak thief!"

Suddenly the electric lights were switched on from the engine room, and the place blazed up with incandescence lamps. The other Jiggers of the squad joined him, carrying a second line. He staggered ahead with his nozzle and turned the corner of a cage to see Doherty flinging open a barred door to let loose a Barbary lion. As it jumped down, "Shine" caught it behind with the water; and the powerful stream turned it over, rolling on the deck. It scampered off with its tail between its legs, like a wet pup.

"Wah!" he screamed, and took Doherty through the empty monkey cage with a split spray that soaked him.

Doherty ducked and ran. "There he

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goes," "Shine" shouted. "Keep 'm off the ladder."

That deck of the fifth hold was a room about forty feet wide and thirty feet long; but the hatch in the center of it was at least twelve feet square, so that the deck was little more than a gallery, as deep as a stall, running around the open hatchway. As "Shine" drove Doherty and the animals ahead, they had to circle around the hatch to approach the ladder from the other side; and there Moore and the fourth man had already turned the hose on some of the frightened leopards—of which Doherty had released five—and driven them back on him. And Doherty, finding himself between the two attacks, penned in with the animals that retreated on him, ran to a corner where there were several cages of polar bears, threw open the

OLD CLINKERS

doors of these, prodded the bears out with a pole, and hid himself on top of the farthest cage.

Lions and leopards would run from water. Polar bears, he knew, would not.

If "Shine" did not know, it was not long before he learned. He and Cripps had come as far as their hose would allow them when the first of the big white beasts, attracted by the splash of water, came shouldering along the passageway with its mouth open, panting. "Shine" raised a vainglorious whoop and put the hose on it. It rose on its hind legs to take the water, and it went over on its back in a deliciously cool bath, pawing at the stream that struck it rather too heavily for play. It rolled over, fighting, and came to all fours with a growl. The water struck into its eyes and into

OLD CLINKERS

its open jaws; it dodged blindly, biting less playfully; it began to wrestle and roll about, fighting in on the stream.

"Gee!" he cried. "This is a garden hose to that brute. Here's another!"

He caught the second as it came, and toppled it over on the first. It joined in the game. While he held one back, the other ran in under the stream, and together they gained ground on him. When the third suddenly loped up and presented its great bulk to the bath, he began to shout for a bigger line, retreating as the bears worked in on him. He was glancing back over his shoulder anxiously for aid, when he saw a lion crouching in the passage behind him, dripping wet, but of a ferocious aspect. He lost his voice. He swung his pipe, gasping, at the newcomer and drove it back. He turned on the bears again

OLD CLINKERS

and caught them as they came in a body. He stopped two of them, but he missed the third, and it rose with an angry growl seemingly right over him and he dropped his pipe and fled with a yell.

At that moment a strong stream, from the deck above, came slantingly down through the hatch and checked the bear as it pursued him.

XXIII

DURING all this time, Chief Borden had been at the coaming of the open hatchway, watching the "Jiggers" from the main deck; and, when the electric lights had been turned on in the hold, he had been able to enjoy "Shine's" combat with the wild animals, from a gallery seat. At first he had been merely an indifferent spectator, much preoccupied with affairs of state in the department; but when he saw the lion driven back among the cages like a doused cat, the shouts of laughter from the men around him set him smiling under his grey mustache. These men, under Keighley, were lower-

OLD CLINKERS

ing the big line down into the hold to attack the fire; and they amused themselves by shouting encouragement to "Shine" as if they were following a bull fight. The situation was the funnier because "Shine" was unable to hear them—on account of the uproar around him—and unable to see them because he was in the light and they in darkness; and he whooped and danced about with his nozzle, unconscious that he was playing the clown for their amusement. "Give it to 'em," they called. "Kick 'em in the slats. Ho-ho! This 's more fun 'an a circus!"

The chief—naturally a jovial man, with a bluff military manner—enjoyed it as much as anybody. But when the bear appeared, they all saw danger in the joke. "Here," the chief cried.

OLD CLINKERS

“He’ll never hold that brute. Get a bigger line down to him. There comes another. They’ll eat him up.”

Keighley and his men ran back to bring up a three-inch line, and the chief remained laughing at the duel between “Shine” and the bears. He shouted, “Back out, you fool!”

Moore and the fireman with him, who were just below where the chief stood, heard the order and obeyed it. By so doing they left “Shine” unprotected from an attack in the rear. When the third bear appeared, the excitement became frantic; and the whole company, from the chief down, pulled on the incoming hose and shouted and laughed together.

The chief, at the nozzle, was the first to see the lion creeping around the hatch. “Stop him!” he cried, to no-

OLD CLINKERS

body in particular. "Damn it all! Behind you, man," he yelled to "Shine." "Look behind you!"

"Shine" could not hear him. The chief took off his cap and threw it down at the animal, vainly. He dropped on his hands and knees beside the hatch, clutching the nozzle of the three-inch line, bellowing hoarsely for water, half-choked with laughter. When "Shine" caught sight of the lion and turned from the bears to drive it back, the chief saw the bears closing in, and he hammered on the iron coaming of the hatch with the nozzle, in an inarticulate excitement. And then he got water just as "Shine" dropped his pipe and ran; and he struggled with his kicking nozzle, the tears of laughter running down his cheeks, unable to see the bears whom he was trying to take in the flank with his

OLD CLINKERS

stream so as to hold them until "Shine" could make good his retreat.

Keighley had been working his men like an old slave-driver, glancing back at the chief, every now and then, with a sly, dry smile. Now he caught Borden's pipe and steadied it. "All right, chief," he said. "He's out. Here he comes."

"Shine" climbed, panting, up the ladder. "Hold those brutes off us now," Keighley ordered. "We got to get down to that fire. Here 'Shine'! You an' Cripps take this pipe an' keep those cats away from the hatch."

"Shine" came to the chief's pipe, grinning at the remarks of the men.

"You're as good as a circus," Borden said, wiping his eyes.

"They scared the tripe out o' me."

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Keighley turned to his pipe. "I'm responsible for this boat"

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The chief gave place to him. Keighley ordered: "Down, ah go, now."

Cripps and "Shine," at one angle of the hatch, and Moore and his pipeman, diagonally opposite, commanded the deck below with two solid streams that drove the animals into shelter among the cages, while Keighley and his squad, with axes and ladder straps, went down to fasten their six-inch line and cut an opening for the pipe in the hatch. The smoke blew up in a thick belch as the men stripped off the tarpaulin. "That'll keep Mr. Bear busy," the chief said.

"Mr. Doherty, too," "Shine" volunteered.

The chief looked at him. "Who's this Doherty anyway?"

"Shine" kept his eyes on the pipe.

OLD CLINKERS

"He's the mut that got us all in trouble the time o' the fire on that other Dutch boat."

"I thought the 'Jiggers' were at the bottom of that," the chief said, with a pretended innocence.

"They blamed it on us. They blamed ev'rythin' on us—because some o' the fat heads higher up used th' association in their damn con games."

The chief scowled at this reference to the conspiracy that had ousted . . .
"You're a 'Jigger,' are you?"

"That's what I am," "Shine" admitted, with bravado. "I'm a 'Jigger' all right, but I ain't a back-sticker, any more'n half the other fullahs I know—an' they didn't ask us before they put up their deal with the Commissioner, if yuh want to know."

The chief's dignity would not let him

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discuss such matters with a man in the ranks. He said, "Shut off your nozzles there, now. You're putting too much water on that deck"—and walked away without further remark.

"Shine" said, under his voice, to Cripps: "That'll hold *him* fer a while."

Cripps replied, with a convincing oath, "It's true, too."

A hole had been cut in the hatch below, and a denser smoke rose from it. There was nothing to do now but wait for the six-inch line to drown out the smolder; and Cripps and "Shine" waited, standing with their pipe.

"Watch that ladder," "Shine" whispered. "Doherty 'll be tryin' to make his sneak while its thick up here."

A moment later, he yelled suddenly: "Yah!" And dropping his pipe, he

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ran to fling himself on Doherty as the ex-fireman leaped out of the smoke. They rolled together on the deck.

"Hold that man," the chief ordered, as the crew tore the fighting "Shine" from his enemy. They lifted Doherty to his feet and backed him against the winch. "The police 'll want him for interfering with firemen in the discharge of their duties." He turned to the four "Jiggers." "I want you men to appear in court against him, understand? . . . That'll do *you*," he said to "Shine." "Go back to your place."

"Shine" went back to his place, licking his lips, with a venomous grin.

The rest of the fire was merely an affair of "standing fast" while the six-inch line flooded the hold; and in half

OLD CLINKERS

an hour "the job" was done. The German first officer and his men took charge of Doherty and agreed to turn him over to the police as soon as their boat tied up to the pier; and to them was left the work, too, of returning the wild animals to their cages. The firemen were free to pick up their lines and return to the *Hudson*, chaffing "Shine."

"That's all right," he swaggered. "I'm a li'n-tamer, all right, all right."

"Yuh're not much on polar bears," they told him.

He retorted delicately, "Yuh can't train a brute that's got no sense. Polar bears are like youse guys. They're holler in the cocoa."

"It was *you* that did the hollerin'."

"I was callin' you fullahs on. I seen yuh was a-scared to come."

OLD CLINKERS

“The hell yuh say! Conlin in the lion’s den. Y’ought to set up a show down on Coney.”

“Shine” winced at that thrust. “Never mind,” he said, with a curse. “I done fer Doherty!”

Cripps drew him aside. “Are yuh goin’ t’ appear against Doherty?”

“Well, *am* I!” he cried. “Watch me! I wish t’ell it was a murder case, that’s all! An’ if you an’ Moore won’t stan’ by me, yuh can go —”

“That’s all right,” Cripps put in hastily. “We’ll stan’ by yuh, ‘Shine’.”

“Yuh *better!*” “Shine” said.

The other men kept discreetly silent, and the boat turned back for the run down the river.

XXIV

“WELL,” the chief said to Keighley, when they were alone again in the bows, “I guess your company’s all right, Dan. If those four men go into court against Doherty, it lets me out. I’ve got no kick coming.” He smiled a satisfied slow smile. “Their association isn’t as strong as it was, eh?”

Keighley passed a worried hand over his forehead. “Chief,” he said, “I’ve had a good deal o’ trouble in the las’ two months, an’ I’ve been doin’ a lot o’ thinkin’. An I v at to tell yuh this: Here’s this fire department as clean as anyone ’d want it, an’ here’s ev’ry other department in this town, between you

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an' me, gettin' rotten with graft. Why don't politics get a hold on us." He leaned forward poking out his forefinger. "'Cause politics can't put out a fire, an' a fire, when it starts, has *got* to be put out, er the whole damn town goes up. Yuh can't fool with a fire."

"Well?" the chief said.

"Well," Keighley went on, "that's where the 'Jiggers' fell down. An' if *you've* come back to the department to pound 'Jiggers' an' knife the men 'at knifed you, that's where *you'll* fall down. Don't get on yer ear, now. If this ain't true, yuh needn't mind it. An' if it *is* true, yuh can't change it by gettin' sore on me."

"Go ahead," the chief said. "Get it out of your system."

Keighley nodded. "These 'Jiggers' here tried to stick me, instead of at-

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tendin' to their bus'ness—an' they pretty near curled up their toes in the bottom o' the *Sachsen*. Moran tried to stick me at that lumber yard blaze, an' if it hadn't been fer the way m' own men stood by me he'd've been burned out of his job. I attended to my work an' treated 'Jigger' an' anti-'Jigger' the same. An' with Moran an' the Commissioner an' the whole bunch tryin' to trip me up, here I am still. There's somethin' in it, I tell yuh. There's somethin' in it.'

The chief tugged at his mustache.

"There's the police," Keighley went on. "They're rotten—'cause they're playin' politics. Here's the firemen—the same breed as the policemen—an' yuh never hear a word against 'em. Why? 'Cause our work's too hot fer a grafter—an' too hot fer a politician—

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an' too hot fer a 'Jigger,' unless he's a fireman first an' a 'Jigger' after. You put back the men that Moran shifted, an' let it go at that. If yuh do more, yuh'll do worse. An' yuh'll end up in a hole. That's *my* opinion."

The chief said, "Moran's going to get out. There'll be a promotion from the battalion-chiefs. Do you want to quit here an' go on up?"

"D'yuh mean do I want a battalion?"

"Yes."

Keighley shook his head. "Not on yer life."

"Why not?"

He looked out at the pierhouse, which they were approaching. "I like what I got. I been three months gettin' things into shape here. It's a good crew. It's a hell of a good boat."

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"You'll have a softer thing in the other."

Keighley smiled crookedly. "Too much desk work. I ain't happy unless I got a fire in front o' me. When I want somethin' softer, I'll take my half pay an' quit."

"All right." Borden stretched out his hand. "I hope that won't be for a good many years yet, Dan. Good-bye."

Keighley fumbled over the proffered hand. He was not used to the amenities. "Good-bye. I hope this'll end the 'Jigger' bus'ness."

The chief nodded. They shook hands solemnly. "I think it will."

And it did. Deputy-Chief Moran remained in his position; and through him it was announced to the "Jiggers" that

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a general amnesty had been declared, and that no "Jigger-jumper" would be punished for belonging to his "benevolent association" unless he tried to use his membership to intrigue for promotion, or allowed himself to be so used. That policy was in the end so successful that the "Jiggers" lost even their distinctive name; and the term "Jigger-jumper" is applied now, in department slang, to all "blue-shirts" who run at the call of that peremptory little bell to risk their lives and do their duty.

Ask them! Ask any of Keighley's men. Ask "Shine." "We're all Jigger-jumpers," he will tell you. "An' it keeps us on the jump. *On the jump!* You bet. . . . There it goes again . . . That's in our—Seeyullater!" Then—as *he* hurries from the sitting room to the pier—you will see "Old

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Clinkers" issue from the office, with his coat on his arm, glance at the clock, flick you one keen look from a cold grey eye as he goes by, and clear his throat to call from the doorway, with all the confidence of unquestioned command, "All right, boys. Let her go!"

THE END

