



By HENRY RUSSELL MILLER

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They "got it" indeed that afternoon. The Irishman, under the edge of his head, repeated, exact and varied endlessly in the effort to get more work out of his men. The sun, hot table and sabbat, worked erratically, with feverish spurts that brought in exultant reaction, the men became demoralized, interested with one another.

Mark, some victim of the hour, took him a special interest for the multitude of profanity, was hard put to keep his temper in leash. He was, indeed, put to restrain the numerous Swedes, who looked with a desire for national nation. Toward the end of the day even the philosophic Marcel grew ill-natured and snarling. Suddenly Mark felt their hospitality of the noon hour had put upon him a responsibility for them, though they were his enemies by at least ten years.

"One must live, you know," he reminded Marcel. "And one must work." "One must not be tired, that's a thing, m'sieu?" Marcel tipped out a long French oath. "J'aimé, you 'ave no consent to keep that 'chick'."

Suddenly the Swede looked his ahead. "Ay, have you said, 'Ja'?"

Johann was too slow in his mental processes to be eluded with precision. "Pick up that shovel and get to work," Mark commanded sharply.

The Swede blinked stupidly for a moment, then slowly obeyed. "You our boss, hein?" Marcel sneered.

"No, Marcel, where you—your friend," Mark responded.

Marcel, too, stared and then, with a gesture of contrition, bent himself doggedly to his task.

Mark thought he heard a chuckle. He looked up to meet the eyes of the tamer. As to the chuckle, he may have been mistaken in the town for personal glances are no sign of respect. Henley, with the Irish head, diverted on his face of suspicion, Mark gave himself pains to be wary, with a sudden inner expansion. Not Henley, but the exuberance of his malcontent "friends," was the cause of that expansion.

Mark learned that there are a right method and a wrong of doing even the simple task of being a shovel, that there is a fashion of handling even so common an animal as the day laborer which brings out his highest efficiency. He found, moreover, that

he had the gift—granted as often to the fable and the fable of the eye and the way of resistance. Mark liked him, the Irishman, who, on a day's acquaintance, they resorted to him their troubles—would traces dies they were also, only two others, Marcel always called him, "boss," a distinction he accorded not even to Blair, the labor boss.

One chill, foggy evening, as the whistle blew, he looked about him and realized that the expectation for the new mill was completed.

"Why, we're through!" he muttered. Johann stared stupidly.

"Mebbe dat Mosey-time to give us another job, 'eh, 'eh, 'eh?" you turned Marcel hopefully.

"No. We're the finished gang on the work. It's Houlahan's fault. And I haven't had my chance. D—n him!"

"D—n it!" The impending calamity was becoming clear to Johann. "M'sieu, as des 'ere things, that ver bad, Johann, as you, we are los a job," Marcel sighed.

But the fear was not justified. At the toolshed they were ordered to



"Would You Mind Saying That Again?"

report next morning a half hour earlier than usual. And:

"Truitt," said the time clock, "the boss wants to see you."

Mark made his way to the rudimentary that was Blair's office.

"Truitt," the latter demanded, "what's the matter with Houlahan's gang?"

"Too much bullying," Mark answered directly.

"I thought so. Report tomorrow morning."

"Yes, sir. Of course."

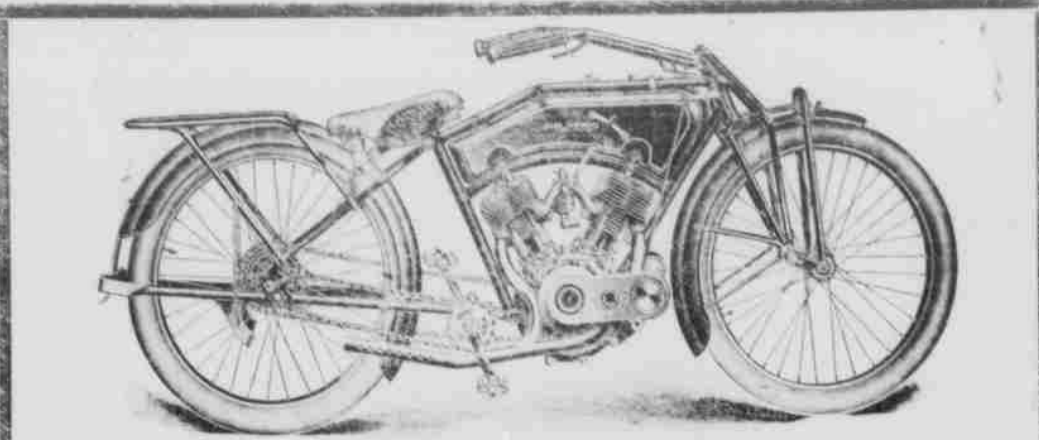
"I'm going to put your gang on the new coke oven beds. It's a rush job. I give you three weeks for it."

"Give me?"

"Yes, I'm putting you in charge of the gang."

For an instant Mark stared foolishly. Then he grinned. "Would you mind saying that again?"

Blair complied. "Look here, as I added boyishly, 'I'm taking a chance



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on you, because you look and talk intelligent. Are you?"

Mark admitted it.

"Then prove it. I want to make a record on this job and so you've got to. Houlahan," Blair added, "didn't and he loses his job. See?"

Mark saw.

In the morning Houlahan reported, happily unaware of a new order of things.

"Houlahan," Blair announced casually, "Truitt will take your gang today."

Houlahan glared malevolently at Mark.

"And where'll I go?"

"You can take Truitt's old place—or quit," said Blair curtly.

"My God!"

There was no resistance. As if dazed, the Irishman shouldered his pick and shovel and with the gang followed Mark to the new job.

You have seen a sensitive horse become docile and eager when a master takes the reins. So it was with Houlahan, now Truitt's gang. They were, since they had survived the weeks of lollygagging, no mean type; and they responded gratefully to the changed leadership. Where they had been sulky and resentful, they now became willing and promptly obedient. As the day advanced, the pace, instead of slackening as under Houlahan's command, grew faster; the last hour's record was the best of all.

Often Mark went home to his lodgings by way of the mills. Then he began to spend his evenings enjoying them, sometimes in company with Blair, who when the day's work was done sunk his rank in a frank liking for his new lieutenant.

At first Mark saw only a vast spectacular chaos; a frothing mass of unorder and unrelated machinery and consuming fires. No guiding hand appeared, no purpose was felt. Some awful mischances that must bring the whole fabric crashing to earth seemed always to impend. It was unbelievable that this creation had been brought forth from the mind and by the hand of man.

Gradually to his accustomed eye the chaos resolved itself into a system—rather, a marvelous system of systems that worked with a single purpose, each unit fitting precisely into the ordered whole.

"God!" he exclaimed one night, overcome by the splendor of it all. He and Blair were standing on the bridge over the blooming mill, watching the half-naked troop that with hook and

longs worked a two-ton ingot over the rolls.

"What is it? What's happened?"

Blair looked around for an accident to explain the speculation.

"Nothing. I was just thinking how—how big it is," Mark laughed at the foolishness of his words. "What would you give to be down there?"

There is such a thing as luck. A man—himself an artist who had not yet become exploiter—who had just come unnoticed on the bridge, heard, and with a half smile, saw the eager face.

Blair shrugged his shoulders. "Yes, it's big. But it's hard work. Good pay, though."

"I suppose so," Mark answered carelessly. "I wasn't thinking of that."

The man spoke. "Good evening, Blair."

"Oh! Good evening, Mr. Henley," Blair struck a respectful attitude. "A bad night, sir."

Henley looked at Mark. "I don't just place you. Where have I seen you before?"

Mark flushed at the recollection. "I took a letter I had for you and you caught me."

"So you're Peeping Tom, eh? Did you get a job?"

"Yes, sir. With a pick-and-shovel gang. I'm boss now."

Henley seemed not unduly impressed.

"He's the man that dug the new oven beds," Blair interposed generously. "He did it in two weeks and three days."

"Two weeks and two days," Mark corrected eagerly.

"So long?" Henley continued indifferently.

"I had a spoiled gang. It took a week for me to shape 'em up."

"Humph! That's what we pay bosses for. We gave you credit for that job, Blair."

"I took him out of the gang and put him on the job. But he did the work. He knows how to get work out of men."

And that was high praise—the very highest, Henley thought. He turned again to Mark.

"Are you satisfied with your job?"

"No," cried Mark. "I don't want to be just a Hunkey-driver. I want to learn how to make steel."

"It's easier to learn how to make steel than to be a Hunkey-driver," Henley said dryly. "However, I think we can find you another job."

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—Everybody Magazine,

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