

The Ambition of Mark Truitt

By HENRY RUSSELL MILLER

Author of "THE MAN WHO RISES TO POWER," ETC.

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CHAPTER XXII—Continued.

"You see," he concluded, "it is critical. I can not understand," he exclaimed strongly, "the present attitude of labor. It is utterly lacking in sense of gratitude, of loyalty. I like to think of the mills as the means to life for thousands of men. And it pains me to see them become hostile and grasping. What have they to complain of?"

"Probably they feel entitled to a little more than a bare existence."

"Didn't we grant the sliding scale three years ago?"

"Perhaps," Mark returned dryly, "they guess from the number of temples to paleontology in prospect that the scale could fairly be raised. It could."

"I don't hold with you."

"What does Henley say?"

"What would Henley say but, Fight. He is mad—utterly mad in his hatred of unions."

"Quite mad."

"In this case he is right. I have not deserved to be compelled to stand and deliver. I have always been fair to labor. I have been willing to compromise our differences, to make concessions. I have felt toward them as a father to his children. They have now no just cause to organize to fight me. And my plans for the future do not admit of a shrinkage in income from raised scales or costly strikes. Oh! Quinby's hands clenched in the stress of emotion. "If I were but as rich as MacGregor! He has been well served by the men he has made."

"Quinby, it seemed, had forgotten his late tribute to his young lieutenant."

"Who made him," Mark corrected.

"No," contradicted Quinby sternly. "To whom he gave opportunity. As I have given it to my partners. And never have I been so ill served as in the handling of this dispute." He paused to let the truth of this disservice sink into Mark's heart.

"That is where I need you. Henley is the last man in the world for such a matter. It is not a bully's task. Truitt, I want you to take charge of the situation, stand between Henley and the men, and settle it."

"Humph! Easier ordered than done. I don't hanker for the job, Mr. Quinby."

"You are the only one of the lot who can meet labor in a human plausible manner. It was you, I believe, who saved us from a strike three years ago—I have never voiced my appreciation of that, but I do so now. You can do it. And you owe it to me to try. Be tactful, be firm but gentle. Save your face and fortify in re. Make non-

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"But that, I fear, is out of the question," Quinby shook his head sadly. "A beautiful dream but—paleontology has claimed me."

They left the matter of reward for future determination.

At Buffalo they left Quinby, whose car was attached to a New York train.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Philanthropy.

The Quinby strike is now history. It is, however, no part of recorded history that during the previous months preceding one man's ill-planned, spending himself to avert the tragic outcome he foresaw. It was quite hidden work. Even had it succeeded it would have been no more widely heralded than in failure.

He did foresee the outcome as tragic, but not because a philanthropist's reputation hung in the balance.

There was one man who saw and understood his efforts. He was Henley.

They were together one day, Mark arguing earnestly for a compromise. Henley listened, not because he was impressed by the arguments, but because he was studying the pleader.

"Are you for us," he interrupted a long period to demand sharply, "or for the men?"

"I'm for both."

"You can't be for both. Are you?" Quinby, it seemed, had forgotten his late tribute to his young lieutenant.

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"Have you forgotten? I think it comes through Mr. Quinby."

"Take it anyhow," he answered promptly. "Since you won't let me help you."

"I don't like to be under obligations to him."

"Take it. If he meant mischief, I think we'd have heard from him before now. And it's only fair for somebody to get something out of him. God knows I'm doing enough for him."

"You mean with the men?"

"Yes. Though, if he only knew it, I'm not doing it for his sake. I believe it was for the men I undertook the job." He shook his head gloomily. "But the worst of it is, I'm almost certain to fail."

"Oh, I hope not."

"Yes. Sometimes I think I'm the only sane man left on earth. Each side thinks it's bound to win. One side is—and it isn't the men. But they won't listen to me. It makes me sick to think what they'll have to pay if they go into this hopeless contest. You don't know how the thing is taking hold on me. You think this queer talk from me?"

"I don't find it queer."

"It is queer. I haven't come to the why yet. Do you believe," he asked abruptly, "that love can awaken all the sympathies?"

"I believe that it can."

"Wouldn't it be strange," he went on musingly, "if through Quinby—the philanthropist—I've found my big idea?"

"Your big idea?"

"Yes. He forgot that no Richard Courtney had ever defined it for her. I'll probably fall in this wrangle. But after that—why not?—the happy city, and in Bethel. The thing's getting into my blood. Or am I, after all, the one who is mad?"

If she was white, he laid it to weariness. "If you are, I love your madness."

A silence. When she broke it he, absorbed in the train of thoughts set in motion by mention of the unbuilt city, did not catch the odd strained note in the words.

"Then you think I'd better take the position?"

"Ah!" He came back remorsefully to the subject. "Of course, you must take it."

"Even from Quinby?"

"However it comes, you're fitted for it. You've earned it."

"But," she insisted quietly, "I'd have to live at the hospital. I'd have no excuse for keeping this apartment."

"Oh, no, surely not! You mustn't give it up. I need you, Kazia—these hours—!" Alarm had driven all but love—he still called it love—from his heart for the moment. He leaned over and caught her to him.

"Not at once, perhaps," she murmured weakly. "I could come here sometimes—until the lease expires—"

He laughed. "Do you think love is determined by a landlord's contract?"

"Not by that!" With a little gasping cry she reached up and clung to him.

During the last days of the negotiations Mark almost hoped the strike could be averted. Then men, listening to his persuasions, agreed to accept a merely nominal increase in the wage scale. But the agreement must be signed, not by the men as individuals, but by the union for them; from that stand the young organization, its very life at stake, would not be moved.

Three men were in Henley's office on that last night before the decision was announced. One had just made his final plea for the compromise.

Henley shook his head firmly. "I will not recognize the union."

"But they ask so little."

Both glanced at the other man, a tall stately figure, pacing, hands clasped behind his back, up and down the room. A troubled despairing frown roughened the lofty brow.

"I'm looking ahead," Henley replied. "Labor organizations never go back, unless you catch 'em young and kill 'em off. Recognize them now and three years hence they'll demand a raised scale. Next, it will be the closed shop. Then another raise, and so on. We'll be running our mills for the benefit of men who have no stakes in them, never knowing when they'll be after us with new outrageous demands. I will not have it." Henley spoke with feeling.

The pacing figure stopped, looking at Mark. "What have you to say to that?"

"I say, the men are desperate. They'll stop at nothing to win the strike. It will cost us millions."

"Cheaper now than ever," Henley interrupted.

"I say," Mark went on, "this industry, this company, can afford to grant any demands labor will ever make. And there's such a thing as humanity. If that isn't enough—" He paused, looking steadily at Quinby. "If that isn't enough, I say the public is on the men's side and it hasn't forgotten the Siamese twins of production and other beautiful sentiments publicly uttered by a certain famous philanthropist."

Quinby groaned and resumed his anxious pacing. But he was halted by Henley's next words.

"You had a visit from some men in New York last week?"

"How do you know?" Quinby was visibly startled.

"I advised them to see you," Henley rejoined. "They're men of power. They own newspapers. They can make and unmake men and reputations. They can destroy you as easily as they would a corner grocer. They're interested in the future of steel. They're more interested, as every controller of property must be, in the fight to stamp out this epidemic of labor agitation. I remind you, it isn't safe to disregard their advice."

"What interest have they in my reputation?"

"Humph! They think as I do—damn your reputation!"

Quinby started, glared. His tongue fumbled vainly for words to answer this astounding lese-majesty. He took a step toward Henley, menacingly.

"Humph!" Henley grunted again. "You can save your wind, I'm not afraid of you just now. And I won't let this company be crippled by giving in to the union. The men who saw you won't permit it either—without punishing."

"I suppose you think they can keep you in this company, too?"

"No," Henley answered steadily. "Between you and me they won't interfere. But between you and them—between your expensive reputation and their interest—they will interfere. The labor unions are your common enemy."



Then Men Listened to His Persuasions.

If you let them get a foothold here, you may as well lie down and die. For there isn't a spot on earth where the truth about Quinby—hatred gave savagery to the threat—the pious fraud, the hounder of women, the traitor in business dealings, won't reach."

Quinby's glare had no power now, as at another time, to subdue Henley. He sank into a chair, stretching out his hands to Mark in a helpless gesture. "Can't you say something?"

"If you aren't a coward and a fraud," Mark answered with undisguised disgust, "you'll know what to say. If you are—" He concluded with a shrug.

It was an intolerable moment for Quinby. He rose, made a pitiable effort to gather the tatters of his vanity around his naked cowardice.

"I leave you in charge. I go to New York tonight. An expedition starts for Tibet tomorrow. I shall join it."

He stalked stiffly to the door. There he stopped for a second, looking back with eyes that were not good to see.

Henley turned to Mark. "As for you," he began sternly, "I've let you play your game, because you could do no harm. But now, having learned that you can't pin faith even to the vanity of a coward—"

Mark met his gaze quietly. "I have learned more than that. But, at least, the feet were of iron, after all."

The next day the failure of negotiations was announced. On the next the strike was ordered.

Henley was ready. On the morning of the third day detached squads of strangers appeared in the vicinity of the mills, trying to saunter along with the air of casual ease. They were Henley's strike breakers, gathered from many cities.

And the strikers were ready, though few of them wot of preparation.

The first squad slipped unnoticed into the mills, and a second. Then along the mile or more of street an electric word passed from watching crowd to crowd: "Henley's strike breakers!" The third squad reached the refuge of the mills only by a sudden overbearing dash. The fourth found its way blocked and itself pressed back by a surging cursing mob. The remaining strike breakers rallied to this point and in a body tried by brute force to drive a lane through the resisting pack of men and women. But the mob grew faster, gathered around the invaders, roughly jostling them and shrieking taunts and blasphemies. Blows were struck, missiles hurled. Then above the clamor a shot was heard.

"A woman is killed!" answered by a hoarse frenzied yell. Many weapons flashed from pockets where they had lain hidden. Other shots were heard, fired pointblank at living targets. The melee became a battle. When it was over, the strike breakers had fled and two score and more lay dead on the streets. Through the labyrinth of silent machinery and chilling furnaces a mob that panted with the thirst for blood hunted out and shot down those of Henley's men who had reached the mills. . . . Mad! Mad as though a battle waited to be taken.

Two days the terror lasted. The mills—sacred property!—were wrecked. Timid posers were driven back. Crazy orators harangued the mob and took for ironic text "the Siamese twins of production."

Then with measured tread and gleaming bayonets came the force of the law, and peace—the peace of the strong—hovered once more over Quinby's mills.

however, with a blare of trumpets. In fact, he came almost secretly, though not wholly out of modesty; no reporter so bold or so shrewd as to win to his well-guarded presence. The cynical public had lately become deeply interested in the Siamese twins of production and upon the devoted head of their author had heaped its cruel satire.

But Quinby's return was not without its objects. One of them was to unseat the arrogant Henley, and to delay Henley, without concealment or delay, bent his energies. In the other, which seems to prove that in matters of sex are neither prince, priest nor peasant, but only man and woman, more finesses was employed. Only one person had an inkling of this project and she kept well the secret.

There was heard a merry cracking of whips. One by one Quinby won the minor stockholders over to his primary object and approached the point where he could deal the blow. Henley grimly waited. Mark was not approached on the matter, for the sufficient reason that he, too, had been singled out for vengeance.

"Quinby is back," he told Kazia once.

There was a perceptible pause before she answered. "Yes. He visited the hospital the other day."

"Keeping his hand in, I suppose," he said lightly. "Unhappily, Quinby is cut off from public philanthropic exercises until the present cloud passes."

She achieved a smile.

"But humanity's loss isn't our gain," Mark grinned wryly. "He's getting ready to eliminate Henley and me from the company."

"Oh, that's too bad. Will it make you—poor?"

"No. But it will leave me considerably less rich than I'd like to be."

"I thought you didn't care for money?"

"No man cares so little for it that he's willing to lose it. And I'll need every dollar I have."

She guessed what he had in mind. "You say you will need it?"

"For my happy city." He laughed, then grew serious. "Kazia, I'm going to build it. At least, I'm going to start it."

"Ah!" She turned away with a sharp intake of breath. "It—it would be something worth while."

For an hour, unconscious of cruelty, he discoursed of his plans, eagerly and eloquently. His eloquence was not in vain. She listened without comment, but as he talked the picture he saw grew before her, convincing, real—the happy city rising in the beautiful valley, a place where men toiled and were not consumed, found refuge from weariness not in vice, but in clean contented homes and wholesome sports, gave of their best to the labor because of its earnings they had a just share, living hopefully. . . . She measured it by the life of the steel maker as she had seen it, and him by the quality of his dream.

"Do you see it?"

"I see it."

"One of the things I've learned is to understand men of wealth. Their cruelties are the cruelties of cowardice—the fear of those who have that those who have not will force a distribution of the spoils. They're afraid of anything new or different. Therefore they will fight me as only cowards can—until they're convinced even humanity can pay dividends. That," he frowned, "is where Quinby will pinch me. Every dollar he takes from me will lessen my chances of pulling through the first fight."

"Can't you stop him?"

"As easy stop a mad snake. Quinby has much to take out on Henley and me. And we're helpless."

"Perhaps a way out will be found."

The flat lifeless voice, so unlike hers, recalled him to her.

"Are you disgusted?" he exclaimed remorsefully. "Here I've been cackling away like Quinby himself, never noticing how tired you are. Let me take you back to the hospital."

"No. I arranged to stay here overnight to begin packing my things up."

"But your lease—"

"Even leases," she answered quietly, "don't always run their full course. The agent has a tenant who wants this apartment and I promised to move out next week."

"Kazia!" He found himself flushing. Only by a strong effort could he make his eyes meet hers. "That means you think I'm forgetting you in my new plans."

"I think," she answered, "only that you're a man and that love, especially such love as ours, isn't enough."

He looked at her in silence for a moment. "Kazia," he began very gently, "I could lie to you, but there must be no lies between us. Love isn't enough—even such love as ours. A man must do his work. It's the inescapable law. But that doesn't mean that love—that you won't always have a big place with me, a place all your own." He drew her closer, so that her head rested on his shoulder, and smoothed the thick dark hair. "It never occurred to me you wouldn't be as interested as I in my plans. You've given me so much, you've seemed so much a part of what I'm to do—I've thought of it as our work—"

A hand stole over his mouth. She raised her head, and she was smiling. "Don't! You make me ashamed. . . . And now you must go."

"Can't I stay to help you?"

"A man pack!" she laughed gaily.

"A man," he sighed, trying to be jocular, "has so many limitations. But it's all right, Kazia?"

"It's all right."

But when he was gone the gay manner vanished. The strong figure drooped wearily. She fell to her knees beside a chair, burying her face in her arms.

"What does he know of love?"

The next evening, returning to his hotel for a late dinner, Mark found a

memorandum to call up the Todd hospital. From the hospital he received word that Mrs. Whiting had gone to Rose alley and asked him to follow her. Some one was dying. He did not wait for dinner, but hailing a cab, set out on another journey to Rose alley.

He stumbled hastily up the gloomy staircase to Roman's door and rapped lightly. It was opened by an unkempt foreign woman, doubtless a neighbor, and he entered. Save for her the kitchen was empty. But by the light of a smoky lamp that stood on the table near an inner door, he saw a group dimly outlined. On a narrow bed lay a huge dropsical figure, seeming to Mark already dead. The Matka, more faded than ever, sat at the dying man's side, motionless as he, her gaze fixed rigidly upon him.

"Thank you for coming," Kazia said. "I'm glad you sent for me. Is there anything I can do?"

"Yes, get Piotr. He went away early this morning and doesn't know. It was very sudden. You'll probably find him at—"

"She named a corner a mile or more distant. "He makes speeches there every evening."

The cab came to a halt at a corner where many people passed. A small changing crowd had gathered around a man who from his soap box harangued them. He preached a gospel that, beginning with a germ of love, had grown in him into a creed of hate. It was a rambling incoherent harangue, full of bitter denunciation and vague generalities that never came to a point—the grotesque but pitiful outpouring of a feeble mind obsessed by a sense of injury real or fancied and cracking under the effort to inoculate others with its venom. Mark listened a moment.

"The man must be mad," he thought pitifully.

Piotr in his ramblings came to the late strike. He began a roll call of the masters of the Quinby company—Quinby himself, Henley, Higbee, Hare—

"And Truitt!" The hoarse voice became, if that were possible, even more bitter. He fairly writhed as he shrieked out his charges. "Truitt the wife-beater! The rouser! With his women—!" For several minutes he raved on, regaling his audience with an array of disgusting but apocryphal details of Truitt's life that to his diseased fancy must have become proved facts.

"Go tell him to come here," Mark ordered the cabman. "Tell him his father is dying."

"Aw, hell!" growled a big Irishman in the crowd, audible even to the cab. "Shut up! Truitt's th' only wan av th' lot wid bowls t' him."

"Fool—fool!" Piotr shook clenched fists at the Irishman. "Are you taken in because he tried to stop the strike? Who was he working for then, you or Quinby? Where was he when Henley's strike breakers came to steal your jobs and shoot down your women? Where was his money when your children were starving for bread? Where—"

But the cabman had reached him with Mark's message. For a moment Piotr stared stupidly, trying to take in its meaning. Then he uttered a wild piercing cry.

"Dying!" He leaned toward the crowd, hands and face twitching in his frenzy. "My father's dying, but he can wait while I tell you about this Truitt. When he was starting out he came to our house, because my father took pity on him. My father loved him, better than he did his own son. He watched over him, cared for him, taught him all he knew of his trade. Then the old man broke. He wouldn't have been old anywhere else, but he had burned himself up trying to make Quinby's furnace bells pay. They threw him out, of course—and Truitt took his job. Truitt—partner of Quinby! The old man's heart broke. Then his mind gave way. And now he's dying—do you know where? In Rose alley!"

The crowd had become very still. To them, too, the tragedy that tortured the madman was clear; infinite repetition could not take away its bitterness.

"And that isn't all." The emotional delirium reached its climax. "In that house was a girl—just an ignorant Hunky girl but the kind men love. And Truitt made love to her. But when he left us, he left her, too—another broken heart! To forget him she married a worthless rummy she had to leave. Then she went out into the city to make her own living—you know the fight and the price women must pay or go down. And she—the girl he wouldn't take up with him—she paid—"

Bewilderment choked back the stream of words. For a man—whose pallor was not due to the garish arc lamp—had leaped from the cab and was elbowing a way swiftly toward him. The crowd fell back to let the man through, then pressed closer. Only Piotr and the Irishman recognized him. Mark caught Piotr by the arm and jerked him roughly from the box.

The Irishman's heavy hand fell on Mark's shoulder. "Let be, sor." Then he fell back before the livid countenance Mark turned on him.

"Keep out. I'll do him no harm. I'm only taking him to his father, where his place is instead of here blackguarding women he isn't fit to touch."

Piotr jerked his arm free. "I won't go with you!"

But the Irishman caught him. "Ye'll go as Misher Truitt tells yez. I'm thinkin' he's just loony, sor."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



"Truitt—Place Myself in Your Hands."

lual concessions. Even go a little farther than that. But, Truitt, above all things there must be no strike. He leaned forward and put a hand impressively on Mark's knee.

"Truitt— There was a hint of nervous haste in the mellifluous voice. "Truitt, a strike would place me in a false position. I am known to have uttered publicly certain views on labor's rights. I still hold firmly to those views—in the abstract. I also hold that they do not apply to this case. But the world would not understand that. It would say—" He paused again, leaving Mark to imagine what the usual cynical world would say.

Mark thought he could imagine it.

"Truitt!" Quinby brought his hands in a slow splendid gesture down on Mark's shoulders. "I place myself in your hands. My reputation is dear to me. Not for my own sake, but because my work to which I have pledged myself—"

Mark turned a frowning gaze out of the window. Ten miles or more sped by before he looked at the waiting Quinby.

"Pl try it."

"I knew you would," Quinby smiled once more. "Succeed and you will find me not ungrateful. Henley, I believe, is thinking of retiring—" Their eyes met.

"Does Henley know it?"

Quinby ignored the question. "He himself has said you are the only man of the broad view and—"

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rupted. "But if I pull it through, I'd rather you'd let me build that new city." He laughed queerly. "Strange as it may seem, the notion appeals."

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Quinby groaned and resumed his anxious pacing. But he was halted by Henley's next words.

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"What interest have they in my reputation?"

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Pressure of Truth.

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