

The Manager Of the B. & A.

By VAUGHAN KESTER

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Continued from Sunday.)

had been well content with him and now he felt that somehow he had lost his bearings. Why was it he had not known before that the mere climb, the mere earning of a dollar, was not all of life? He even sneaking envy of Ryder of which he was heartily ashamed.

He fell in love differently. Some read hang back from the inevitable, being sure of themselves, and some along, never having any doubts, characteristic singleness of purpose went headlong, but of course he did not know what the trouble was long after the facts in the case patent to every one, and Antioch's interest in its speculations as to whether the doctor's daughter would be the editor or the general manager, as Mrs. Poppleton, the Emory's neighbor, sagely observed, was "having her pick."

Oakley Miss Emory seemed to cultivate dignity and reserve in the proportion that he lost them, but she determined she should like him never did more than that.

It was just the least bit afraid of the news he was not deficient in her pride and that he possessed of self respect, but for all that he was not very dexterous. It amused her to lead him out and then to draw and leave him to founder out of untenable position she had been in to assuming.

He displayed undeniable skill in maneuvers, and Dan was by savage and penitent. But she gave him a chance to say what he had to say.

She made his appeal to her vanity was a strong appeal. He was easily presentable and companionable. She understood him, and they were in common, but for all that she did not approve of Oakley. She had a direct and simple and strong judgment of him she was very generous. She could not understand, for instance, how it was that he had been willing to allow his name to go to work in the shops like one common hands. It seemed to argue such an awful poverty in his ideals.

He tried to stifle her growing liking for him and her unwilling admiration.



Infinitely pathetic to think of her little man and his work?

His strength and honesty and his native refinement. Unconsciously, perhaps, she had always associated with this sort with position and wealth. She divined his lack of opportunity and was alive to the crudities of speech and manner he suffered, as he knew he would, by comparison with the but in spite of this Constance knew deep down in her heart possessed solid and substantial of his own.

CHAPTER VIII.

RYDER came to town to remind his Antioch friends and supporters that presently he would be needing their votes. He was absent for a week, and the Herald followed his movements with pains-taking accuracy and with what its editors considered metropolitan interest. The great man had his headquarters at the Herald of-an-shackle two story building west side of the square. Here at home to the local politicians such of the general public as wished to meet him. The former smokers and talked incessantly of nominations and majorities on which they appeared to be sundly versed. Their distinguishing mark was their capacity for talk, which was far in excess

of that of the ordinary citizen who took only a casual interest in politics.

Kenyon was a sloppily dressed man of forty-five, or thereabout, who preserved an air of rustic shrewdness. He was angular faced and smooth shaven and wore his hair rather long in a tangled mop. He was generally described in the party papers as "the picturesque statesman from old Hanover." He had served one term in congress. Prior to that, by way of apprenticeship, he had done a great deal of hard work and dirty work for his party. His fortunes had been built on the fortunes of a bigger and an abler man, who, after a fight which was already famous in the history of the state for its bitterness, had been elected governor, and Kenyon, having picked the winner, had gone to his reward. Just now he had a shrewd idea that the governor was anxious to unload him and that the party leaders were sharpening their knives for him. Their change of heart grew out of the fact that he had "dared to assert his independence," as he said, and had "played the sneak and broken his promises," as they said, in a little transaction which had been left to him to put through.

Personally Ryder counted him an unmitigated scamp, but the man's breezy vulgarity, his nerve and his infinite capacity to jolly tickled his fancy. He had so far freed himself of his habitual indifference that he was displaying an unheard of energy in promoting Kenyon's interest. Of course he expected to derive certain very substantial benefits from the alliance. The congressman had made him endless promises, and Ryder saw, or thought he saw, his way clear to leave Antioch in the near future. For two days he had been saying, "Mr. Brown, shake hands with Congressman Kenyon," or, "Mr. Jones, I want you to know Congressman Kenyon, the man we must keep at Washington."

He had marveled at the speed with which the statesman got down to first names. Mr. Kenyon said modestly when Griff commented on this that his methods were modern—they were certainly vulgar.

"I guess I'm going to give 'em a run for their money, Ryder. I can see I'm doing good work here. There's nothing like being on the ground yourself."

It was characteristic of him that he should ignore the work Ryder had done in his behalf.

"You are an inspiration, Sam. The people know their leader," said the editor genially, but with a touch of sarcasm that was lost on Kenyon, who took himself quite seriously.

"Yes, sir. They'd 'a' done me dirt," feelingly, "but I am on my own range now and ready to pull off my coat and fight for what's due me."

They were seated before the open door, which looked out upon the square. Kenyon was chewing nervously at the end of an unlit cigar which he held between his fingers. "When the nomination is made I guess the other fellow will discover I ain't been letting the grass grow in my path." He spat out over the door sill into the street.

"What's that you were just telling me about the Huckleberry?"

"This new manager of Cornish's is going to make the road pay, and he's going to do it from the pockets of the employees," said Ryder, with a disgruntled air, for the memory of his interview with Dan still rankled.

"That ain't bad either. You know the governor's pretty close to Cornish. The general was a big contributor to his campaign fund."

Ryder hitched his chair nearer his companion's.

"If there's a cut in wages at the shops, and I suppose that will be the next move, there's bound to be a lot of bad feeling."

"Well, don't forget we are for the people," remarked the congressman, and he winked slyly.

Ryder smiled cynically.

"I shan't. I have it in for the manager anyhow."

"What's wrong with him?"

"Oh, nothing, but a whole lot," answered Griff, with apparent indifference.

It was late in the afternoon, and the men from the car shops were beginning to straggle past, going in the direction of their various homes. Presently Roger Oakley strode heavily by, with his tin dinner pail on his arm. Otherwise there was nothing, either in his dress or appearance, to indicate that he was one of the hands. As he still lived at the hotel with Dan, he felt it necessary to exercise a certain care in the matter of dress. As he came into view the congressman swept him with a casual scrutiny; then, as the old man plodded on up the street with deliberate step, Kenyon rose from his chair and stood in the doorway gazing after him.

"What's the matter, Sam?" asked Ryder, struck by his friend's manner.

"Who was that old man who just went past?"

"That? Oh, that's the manager's father! Why?"

"Well, he looks 'most awfully like some one else, that's all." And he appeared to lose interest.

"No, he's old man Oakley. He works in the shops."

"Oakley?"

"Yes, that's his name. Why?" curi-



"I came to see what you meant by this."

"Say, Milt," said one of these, "have you tumbled to the notices, 10 per cent all round? You'll be having to go down in your sock for coal."

"It's there, all right," cheerfully.

"I knew when Cornish came down here there would be something drop shortly. I ain't never known it to fall. The old skink! I'll bet he ain't losing any money."

"You bet he ain't, not he," said a second, with a short laugh.

The first man, Branyon by name, bit carefully into the wedge shaped piece of pie he was holding in his hand. "If I was as rich as Cornish I'm hanged if I'd be such an infernal stiff! What good is his money doing him, anyhow?"

"What does the boss say, Milt?"

"That wages will go back as soon as he can put them back."

"Yes, they will! Like fun!" said Branyon sarcastically.

"You're a lot of kickers, you are," commented McClintock good naturedly. "You don't believe for one minute, do you, that the Huckleberry or the shops ever earned a dollar?"

"You can gamble on it that they ain't ever cost Cornish a red cent," said Branyon as positively as a mouthful of pie would allow.

"I wouldn't be too sure about that," said the master mechanic, walking on.

"I bet he ain't out none on this," remarked Branyon cynically. "If he was he wouldn't take it so blamed easy."

The men began to straggle back from their various homes and to form in little groups about the yards and in the shops. They talked over the cut and argued the merits of the case, as men will, made their comments on Cornish, who was generally conceded to be as mean in money matters as he was fortunate, and then went back to their work when the 1 o'clock whistle blew in a state of high good humor with themselves and their critical ability.

The next day the Herald dealt with the situation at some length. The whole tone of the editorial was rancorous and bitter. It spoke of the parsimony of the new management, which had been instanced by a number of recent dismissals among men who had served the road long and faithfully and who deserved other and more considerate treatment. It declared that the cut was but the beginning of the troubles in store for the hands and characterized it as an attempt on the part of the new management to curry favor with Cornish, who was notoriously hostile to the best interests of labor. It wound up by regretting that the men were not organized, as proper organization would have enabled them to meet this move on the part of the management.

When Oakley read the obnoxious editorial his blood grew hot and his mood belligerent. It showed evident and unusual care in the preparation, and he guessed correctly that it had been written and put in type in readiness for the cut. It was a direct personal attack, too, for the expression "the new management," which was used over and over, could mean but the one thing.

Dan's first impulse was to hunt Ryder up and give him a sound thrashing, but his better sense told him that while this rational mode of expressing his indignation would have been excusable enough a few years back, when he was only a brakeman, as the manager of the Buckhorn and Antioch railroad it was necessary to pursue a more pacific policy.

He knew he could be made very unpopular if these attacks were persisted in. This he did not mind especially except as it would interfere with the carrying out of his plans and increase his difficulties. After thinking it over he concluded that he would better see Ryder and have a talk with him. It would do no harm, he argued, and it might do some good, provided, of course, that he could keep his temper.

He went directly to the Herald office and found Griff in and alone. When Dan strode into the office, looking rather warm, the latter turned a trifle pale, for he had his doubts about the manager's temper and no doubts at all about his muscular development, which was imposing.

"I came to see what you meant by this, Ryder," his caller said, and he held out the paper folded to the insulting article. Ryder assumed to examine it carefully, but he knew every word there.

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