

TIPPER

...BY...

HAMLIN GARLAND

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CHAPTER XVII CONTINUED

"What was that?" asked Ann. "Some crazy devil under cover of the mist has dynamited the Red Star shaft house."

Even as they waited, listening to faint cries, the wind swept the hillside clear, and Kelly's fears were verified. Mist has dynamited the Red Star shaft house and mill lay scattered over its dump, and toward it the whole camp seemed hastening.

"Oh, the unholy jackasses!" muttered Kelly. "They've opened the door to the witches now. Come, Rob. We may be the next to suffer."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE blowing up of the Red Star mill and shaft house shook the entire district with its possibilities of further violence and concealed beneath its dust and smoke the rich discovery in the Kelly mine. The partners had time to calculate chances and plan for the buying in of the property.

The din of controversy was deafening. The labor leaders disclaimed all knowledge of the outrage and roundly condemned it for the foolishly destructive act it really was. Kelly marched in among them like a grizzly bear and stormed thunderously. "You are responsible," he growled. "You sit here and send out appeals to the world while these homies work their will. Where was Munro and his regulators?"

"They can't be everywhere," explained Carter. "No one supposed such a thing could happen in the daylight."

"You're all a set o' chicken heads. You've created a power ye can't control. I give ye notice that if ye don't go after the thieves that did this work I'll organize a vigilance committee and take charge of the whole gang of ye."

And he strode out of the room, leaving the officers of the union disgraced and angry. He confessed to Raymond on his return that it was a foolish action.

"It was, Matt. You couldn't have done a worse thing. A large number of these dago miners already consider us their enemies, and this will confirm them. We might as well take steps tonight to get our party of the third part in some sort of organization."

All this excitement and worry aided Raymond in tidying over the day, but when midnight came and the committee had slipped away into the night his sense of loss and a feeling of loneliness took possession of him. Ann had announced her intention to return to the Springs at the end of the week, and though she had vaguely promised to visit the peak again, Raymond was not deceived.

"She's quite right," he admitted to his better judgment. "A mining camp is no place for her or for Nora. Since the destruction of that mill it is even less desirable than before as a place of residence."

While on his way to the bungalow the following afternoon he met Munro accompanying a stranger, a big, blond, handsome fellow in a gray traveling suit and soft hat. His face was plump and his brown beard close clipped, and though he realized that he was more or less in duress, his eyes were smiling.

Munro called out, "Rob, do you know this chap?"

"I do not."

Munro turned to his prisoner. "I thought you were lying."

The stranger remained untroubled. "I didn't say I knew Mr. Raymond. I merely said that I wanted you to take me to him. Mr. Raymond, I am Wayne Peabody, an old time friend of Miss Rupert. Will you please explain to this knight of the hills that I am in nowise interested in his strike?"

Raymond looked at him keenly. So here to get Ann to go back to New York, fair man. "I think I have heard of you," he began slowly.

Louis' arrival relieved the awkwardness of the moment. "Eh, Mr. Peabody, how did you get here?"

Peabody caught at the boy's hand. "Well, well, Louis, I'm glad to see you. You saved my life. How is Ann?"

"Fine! You ought to see her work. She's brown as oak. Come on, I'll take you to her. Gee, she'll be glad to see you!"

As Peabody excused himself and made off, Munro, with a world of meaning in his voice, softly swore. "Well, if I'd known that, I would have killed him and laid him away under a little rock. She turned me down flat the other day, and it hurts. It hurts worse now that I've seen the other man. I really hoped you were the winner."

"She's out of our world, Jack," replied Raymond, and a large part of his resentment of Munro's impertinence vanished with the knowledge that he was a fellow sufferer in despair.

Munro went on gravely: "She had me going, sure thing. Why, I stopped drinking—just as I told you I would—and I cut off Claire—say, boy, that was a severe job! She raised dust for a day or two, but when the queen of heaven gave me my job I said, 'What the good?' and slipped into my old ways. Think of us strutting around the parade ground in front of the seats of the visitors with intent to best on old Grant, and here we are! I'm positive you'll be a success."

"I love you, and I want you to know it," he called in a curiously reflective tone that was almost comic.

"What a fall is there, my brother?"

Raymond did not enjoy Munro's tone and changed the subject. "What are you going to do now?"

Munro ceased to laugh. "I am going to cinch this whole camp a little tighter from this on. I'm going to turn back every nonunion miner. All you fellows who are friendly can go on working just the same, but your men must put themselves on record."

Raymond's face settled into stern lines. "Jack, I don't want to be mixed up in another man's fight. We are on good terms with our hands—they're a lot of cantankerous American citizens anyway and can't be coerced. I warn you not to monkey with our plan."

Munro laughed. "I'll fight shy, old man, so far as I'm concerned, but these faggots and Poles are getting wretched, and if they stamped they'd run over somebody. You don't believe in me and my cowboys, but the time may come when you'll see that I'm about the only commander in this camp."

"I see that now, Jack. That's why I'm talking to you. But you've started on a line of action that means war with organized society. You had no call to join those jackasses who ran Mackay out of camp. It was none of your funeral—had nothing to do with the question of wages."

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"I don't know a thing. Of course the union had nothing to do with it. It was done by a few hotheads full of peaches. These mine owners have got to give up their mine hour scheme. We've got 'em dead to rights, for I can drive every nonunion man out of camp if necessary, and my advice to you is, have your men march up and sign our rolls double quick."

"They can do as they please about that. I will bring no pressure to bear on them, but I'd like to ask you as a friend not to make it any harder than you can help for Kelly & Raymond. We've got all we can stagger under now, and the worst thing that can happen to us is delay. We've opened our vein, and we're going to buy in our mine inside of six weeks if nothing prevents."

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At the dinner table Ann studied the two men with highly amused interest. Peabody, easy, assured and calmly tolerant, did the talking, while Raymond listened, a little silently it seemed to her. The New Yorker was most admirable in his consideration for Mrs. Kelly and his interest in everything about him, and yet he did not stir the old Grant, and here we are! I'm positive you'll be a success."

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