PAID IN FULL

Novelized From Eugene Walter's Great Play

By

John W. Harding

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EUGENE WALTER,
Author of "Paid In Full" and "The Easiest Way"

That "Paid In Full" is a story of absorbing interest has been proved by its phenomenal success in dramatic form. For two seasons there has been no diminution in the drawing power of this vital piece of realism. In its present form it is not less engrossing. The features which made it so powerful as a play are not less potent in the serial. It is the same keen exposition of human motives put into the simplest forms of expression. There is no waste of material, no attempt to moralize, no break in the continuity. The three men who are the central figures in the story stand out in admirable distinctness from the very first, and the one woman whose splendid rectitude illuminates it all lives from the moment of her appearance. Although it is certain to produce frequent thrills, the story is neither melodramatic nor sensational. Its power lies in its humanness.

CHAPTER I.

"NO; I'll not give 'em a raise of 't cents an hour nor of a cent an hour; nary a raise, understand. And I don't want you to come here thinking you can bulldoze me, because you'll find mighty quick you're mistaken. If any man thinks he can do that I want to see him."

The words, uttered in a wrathful bellow, came through the closed door of the president's room and were heard by every employee and visitor in the main office of the Latin-American Steamship company, which occupied an entire floor of a big building in Bowling Green, New York city.

Some of the employees smiled and passed the remark that the boss "had 'em bad" that day, but the smiles were of the sickly, apprehensive order, for the fact that he was in execrable humor was perfectly well known to each and all, having been impressed upon them very forcibly at intervals from the minute the great man had made his appearance with his unvarying punctuality as the clock struck 9 a. m. Others scowled and kept their reflections to themselves.

The voices of the other parties to the conversation were not audible to the listeners, but that of the president, with its all penetrating roar, burst forth again:

"I don't give a tin whistle what you or your unions do, understand. Let 'em strike, strike and be d—d. But you tell 'em this from me—that any man who's fool enough to throw up his job does so for good and all. He'll never work again for the Latin-American Steamship company in this or any other port. I'll take care of that. I'll show 'em who and what I am if they don't know."

The door opened, and two white faced, intimidated men emerged, cap in hand. They were rough looking men, evidently laborers inured to the hardest kind of work. They shuffled quickly past the neatly dressed clerks and did not breathe freely until they found themselves in the cross streams of hurrying passersby on the street. There, as they mopped their brows and looked around for a saloon, something of the arrogant insolence with which they had demanded audience of the head of the company and which had been speedily cowed out of them by that formidable and choleric personage returned to them.

Meanwhile at the open door of the room in which they had been through the ordeal of their interview Captain Amos Williams, president and general manager of the line, glared after his departing visitors and round the office. There was dead silence, and every employee, from the highest to the office boys, impudent and irrepressible there, as everywhere else, save when Captain Williams was nigh, became deeply engrossed in his work.

"Call up Mr. Smith and tell him I want to see him at once," he growled to no one in particular. Then he reentered his room and slammed the door.

In a few minutes, however, his bell rang, and a boy responded to it with an alacrity not customary in any other office in all New York.

"Tell Mr. Brooks to come here," was the order he received.

The boy hurried out and approached one of the men behind the brass lattice screens.

"Mr. Brooks, the captain wants you," he announced.

Mr. Brooks did not reply, but he got down leisurely and with bad grace from his stool and moved with equal deliberation to the president's room.

"Brooks, has Fernandez & Co., that Pernambuco firm, been heard from yet?" demanded his employer.

"Check came today," was the laconic reply.

"Full amount?"

"Yes, four thousand eight hundred and seventy-five."

"All right. That's all."

Brooks went out, closing the door behind him, and returned to his desk. He was in a bad temper himself and made no effort to conceal it, for a sullen scowl marred his handsome and usually genial face. Not only was Joseph Brooks handsome, but a rather distinguished looking young fellow, whose clothes sat well and becomingly upon him, albeit they were somewhat shiny from wear and from ironing by inexpert hands at home. And if his collars and cuffs also were just a trifle the worse for wear at least they were immaculately clean.

"Cheer up!" admonished one of his fellow clerks, noticing his ill humor. Brooks' moods were never taken seriously, for with him fits of despondency alternated with a contagious cordiality and an optimism that knew no limit. Of late, however, his spells of gloominess had become wearisomely frequent, and usually they were accompanied by a nervous irritability.

"Cheer up?" he answered, with some heat. "I don't see any reason for cheering up, and I don't feel like cheering up. Did you hear how the brute received those delegates of the Longshoremen's union because they asked him to add a little to their starvation pay to help them keep skin and bone together? Why shouldn't he raise them? Why shouldn't he raise all of us? He's reeking with money, doesn't know what to do with it, yet what does he do but grind us down—grind and grind and grind—grind us as a grain of wheat is ground to powder between the millstones—grind us with his heel, squeezing from us the very sap of brain and life that he may add to his pile."

The clerks near him had listened to this outbreak with amused surprise.

"Well," said the man who had addressed him before, "I haven't noticed you sweating blood to any extent under the grinding process."

"I hope the longshoremen do strike!"

"Jenkins, you're a—a camel," retorted Brooks. "For a wisp of hay you'd let yourself be loaded till the last straw broke your back, and then you'd lick the hand that crushed you."

"Sure," said Jenkins enthusiastically. "Anybody can load me up that wants to."

"And I'll back his liquid capacity to equal that of any camel," chimed in another clerk, while every one within earshot grinned.

"Oh, you can laugh," grumbled Brooks, "but it doesn't alter the truth of what I say. It's men like him that have made our society today what it is, a soulless, heartless, oppressive civilization in which Croesuses walk roughshod over the men who are down and thrust them deeper into the slough with one foot as they climb higher and higher to the power that the possession of inconceivable wealth carries with it."

"'Twas ever thus!" sighed Jenkins. "But there is yet hope. Our Joseph hath received a call to uplift the downtrod."

"How did he get it? What is his record?" went on Brooks, ignoring the interruption. "Why, he started out as a sealer or a south Pacific trader, which in those days was the same as being a pirate, and you know and I know that his name was a terror to sailormen from San Francisco to Australia. He made his first money by bullying and ill treating other men and killing them, too, on occasion. It's a matter of common knowledge. And he's been a buccaneer ever since. Didn't he bunko and sandbag my father-in-law out of control of this company? And what has he done since then but act the brutal tyrant over everybody connected with it, beating us down to the lowest wage a man can exist on that he may add to his dirty heap, running this office with fist, boot and rope end as though it were his lawless ship and we were his groveling Lascar crew. I hope the longshoremen do strike! They would be doing humanity a service if they'd fill him full of bullets."

"There's a lot of truth in what Brooks says," assented a youthful clerk in low tones, looking around cautiously as he did so.

"Well, after all, I don't see that *you're* got such a fierce kick coming," observed Jenkins to the disgruntled orator.

"You don't, eh?" sneered Brooks. "You think $20 a week is big pay for an accountant and collector who's handled half the money of the line for five years, eh?"

"No; I mean that you are at least solid with the boss and sure of your job, which is more than anybody else here is, and that you stand to become an officer high up in the company one of these days. Williams is a friend of your family, isn't he? You yourself have boasted often that he visits you and your wife."

"That's just it. The swine takes advantage of his relations with my wife's people to keep me down and rub it in. Other people get their salary raised, but I don't. Do you call that a square deal?"

"It hardly seems so, but perhaps there's a reason. He may have some object that will appear in due course and you'll go up several numbers at one sweep. In the meantime," continued Jenkins, lowering his voice, "I wouldn't let on like you have this afternoon if I were you, Joe. It can't do any good and might do you a deal of harm. You don't know who might hear you, and the boss somehow knows everything that goes on in the office."

"I don't care," affirmed Brooks sulkily. "I'd just as lief tell him to his face what I think of him, and, by gum, I will one of these days, darn him!"

"All right," laughed Jenkins. "I hope I'll be around at the time so that I can perform for you the last sad rite of gathering up your scattered remains. Ah, here's Jimmy Smith!"

CHAPTER II.

JAMES SMITH, superintendent of the Latin-American Steamship company's docks, had arrived in response to the president's summons, conveyed to him by the telephone. Smith, known to his familiars as Jimsy, was a tall, gaunt, angular man, bearing all over him the stamp of westerner. He was, in fact, from Colorado, where he began his active career by engaging in mining. Scant success attended his efforts in this direction, however, and after working with the dogged determination that was one of his traits until even his patience was exhausted he finally entered the employ of the steamship company in whose service he had risen to his present position, with headquarters in New York.

There was something about Smith that caused men, and women also, for that matter, to take to him on sight. The unbounded good nature, big heartedness and unselfishness beaming in his blue eyes and in his whimsical smile were written in every line of his clean shaven face. Another thing that made him remarked by all who came in contact with him was his absolute imperturbability. In all his thirty-seven years of existence he never had been known to "get a move on," not even when a premature blast in a mine had sent the diggers helter skelter for safety and carried death and suffering to many. Smith had walked tranquilly away amid the rain of rock and earth until it was all over. Then he had returned and organized the work of rescue, his placidity causing the others instinctively to look to him for direction. Nor was his speech more hurried than were his movements. He spoke but little, and then his words came in a quiet, even, distinct drawl. But he "got there" as quickly as most men, and a good deal quicker than some whose nerves were highly strung and with whom rapidity of action was as necessary as breathing, for he was possessed of keen powers of observation and common sense, an earnestness of purpose that gave his utterances weight and an integrity as unshakable as the rock of Gibraltar. As a fitting, almost necessary, complement of such a nature he was endowed with a sense of humor that added not a little to the attraction he exercised for those who knew him sufficiently well to be able to appreciate his qualities of heart and mind.

He took a calm, all embracing survey of the office as he entered, looked over to Brooks' desk and saluted him with a cordial motion of the hand and instructed a boy to notify Captain Williams of his arrival. He was ushered immediately into the chief's presence.

That worthy, who, like his superintendent, was clean shaven, was seated at his desk in his shirt sleeves, and the whole room, despite the wide open windows, was thick from the smoke from an old blackened corncob pipe at which he was puffing vigorously. He was a burly man, and the short, thick neck, the broad shoulders, the powerful, big jointed fingers and the muscles that stood out in bunches on the hairy arms disclosed by his rolled up shirt sleeves denoted that he possessed unusual physical strength. An ugly man to get into an argument with was Williams, one who, it needed no mind reader to judge, would be capable of following the word with a blow that would crush an ordinary opponent. For years, as Brooks had intimated, he had led the roughest life a man can lead, hammering by sheer brute strength a way to wealth by ways in which scruple had counted for nothing at all and expediency for a good deal, and his entrance upon a higher plane of civilization had not imparted much polish to his appearance, habits or speech, which were those of the old time sailing ship mariner, although of late years he had striven to conform more closely to the examples of refinement he witnessed in the only polite society he cared for, which was that of the family of his dead friend, Stanley Harris, who was general manager of the Latin-American line when he obtained control of it. He had a way of glaring at a person from under his bushy eyebrows with a scrutiny that seemed to read through and up and down him and made him most ill at ease under it.

He made his decisions promptly, authoritatively, after the manner of a man accustomed to command and to be obeyed without question, and he never changed them, at least in his business and administrative dealings. Add to all this a voice like a foghorn, the effect of which, when he raised it, was, as he knew full well, to make his subordinates quake and to intimidate others who had to do with him, and it will be realized that he lived up fully to his reputation of being a hard man.

For his quiet, unmovable and thoroughly capable dock superintendent he entertained a certain respect. He knew from experience that the man was not the least bit afraid or even disturbed by his bullying manner and his bellowing and that his glare, always squarely met, had no more effect upon him than it would have upon the bronze statue of Washington which stands sentinel on the steps of the subtreasury in Wall street.

Smith lowered himself slowly and easily into a big armchair beside the president's desk.

"Two delegates from the Longshoremen's union were here just now," announced the captain. "They say the freight handlers are going to strike."

"Ya-as?" said Smith interrogatively.

"Yes. What do you know about it?"

"Nothing, except that they came to me with a demand for higher pay for the men. I referred them to you."

"Well, I didn't leave 'em any loophole for doubt as to my position in the matter."

"You turned them down?"

"Turned 'em down! Of course. What do you think? Suppose I handed 'em a raise on a silver platter and bowed 'em out of the door?"

"I don't suppose anything about it. I'm asking for information."

"Them two blatherskites came swaggering and blustering in here and said every last one of the men would quit tomorrow morning at 11 o'clock unless they got 3 cents more an hour. They wasn't swaggering when they went out of here, I tell you. I pretty soon took the starch out of 'em."

A faint smile flitted over the superintendent's face, but he ventured no remark.

"I told 'em," Williams went on, "that I wouldn't give 'em a cent a century more and to strike and be d—d. I also told 'em that any man who did go out would never get another job with this company, and, by Sam, he won't!"

The captain's voice had risen to a roar, and he brought his fist down on the desk with such force that pens and pencils went flying in all directions and the ink splashed from the wells in their solid crystal stand.

"Them labor agitators ain't got no notion of the fitness of things. They ain't got a grasp on economic conditions for a cent. They got to do something to live without working, so every once in awhile they go to the men as pays 'em to be walking delegates, gives 'em some glib talk about their rights and advises 'em to strike for more money. Do they look around and try to find out whether an advance is warranted by the conditions? Nary a look. Do any of the men they hand out their advice to try to find out? Not on your life! They go ahead like a lot of sheep and strike and starve and blame the result on capital."

Smith nodded.

"If they carry out their threat and quit," continued the captain, "you will clear all the strikers from the docks, throw 'em off if necessary, knock their silly blocks off, but tell them as wants to work that full protection will be given. I'll arrange with police headquarters to have a sufficient force of bluecoats on hand to guard our property and will also notify our docks at other ports to be prepared. You will fix up accommodations for the strike breakers in the sheds here until the trouble is over and make arrangements to bring men from the inland cities. In this matter you need spare no expense. Understand?"

"I guess so," replied the superintendent.

"Then it's up to you."

"Anything else you want to see me about?"

"Not now. You can get in touch with me any time you want me. You know about where I'm to be found."

Smith drew in his long legs, raised himself from the chair and took up his hat to go.

"See here, Smith," said the captain, his voice rising gradually to its fearsome bellow, "it's nigh on to twoscore years since I took my first vessel, the Sally Moran, out of Frisco as master and owner, bound for the south sea islands to trade, and I've commanded my own ship every minute since and held my own against all sorts of lubbers as would have done me and done for me if they could. And do you think I'm going to be dictated to by any white livered gas bag of a crawling delegate who comes here holding a knife to my throat by threatening a turnout without giving me a chance to meet it if I don't give in to his demands on the spot? No, sir, not by an all fired sight! No, sir, not in a thousand years! I own this outfit from keel to main peak, and if I can't run it my own way I'll scuttle it and go down with it. Understand? And if any man's looking for a fight with me he'll find me quick enough, and I'll break him, no matter who or what he is. Yes, sir, by Sam, sir, like this!"

"Yes, sir, by Sam, sir, like this!"

Seizing a thick ruler on the desk, he snapped it without apparent effort, and as he sat glaring there with his disheveled hair, his pugnacious, massive underjaw protruding and his big fists tightly clinched on the broken wood, causing the muscles of his arms to bulge like knots on a gnarled tree, he presented the embodiment of might and ferocity.

"I don't know but what you're right, Cap'n Williams," drawled the superintendent with his unchangeable equanimity. "Anyhow, you sure are entitled to do what you like with your own."

He went out and on his way to the office exit stopped at Brooks' desk.

"Well, how's things, boy?" he inquired with an interest so kindly that one might have thought there was nothing else in the world with which his mind was occupied and never could have suspected that there lay before him for immediate solution the problem of preparing for a great strike that threatened to tie up the business of one of the most important steamship lines in the country, with ramifications extending from Boston all around the coast of South America to San Francisco.

"Oh, so, so," answered Brooks. "By the bye, I'd be awful glad if you'd come up to supper tonight. Emma was saying only this morning that we hadn't seen anything of you for a week."

"That's so. I've got to square myself with Emma, though it hasn't been my fault altogether."

"Then we'll expect you to supper?"

"I can't promise, because I've a deal to do between now and this evening, but I'll come if I can."

"So long, Jimsy."

"So long."

And Smith sauntered out to attend to one of the greatest emergencies he had ever been called upon to meet in his life.

CHAPTER III.

HE was a skillful architect indeed who first devised the bandbox apartment houses so common now in all parts of New York and must have sat up many nights working out how to extricate the maximum of rent revenue from the area on which he had to fit the structure.

If there were any flats in Harlem of smaller dimensions than the one of four rooms occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Brooks the most experienced and persistent hunter after a place in which to lodge his family with relative economy and some semblance of comfort would have had the time of his or her life finding it. And if other flats there were more luxuriously fitted up, as easily might have been—in fact, certainly must have been—the case, at least there was none, whatever its size, that was kept cleaner or neater or in which more effective use of available material had been made than that over which Mrs. Emma Brooks presided as mistress and factotum.

And Mrs. Brooks herself—how she graced it, altogether unconsciously! As the elder of two daughters of Stanley Harris, who, while not rich, had been well to do, she had been brought up in the comfort of a good home and had enjoyed the advantage of an education at a private seminary. Her father, whose constant companion she had been and whose sense of democracy in the matter of association she had inherited, had adored her, and when she had given her heart to Joseph Brooks, electing him from among numerous suitors, including James Smith, he gave his consent to their union against his own judgment and in face of the strenuous opposition of his wife, esteeming the girl's happiness superior to all other considerations.

Brooks, who had been in the employ of the Latin-American Steamship company for one year and had been brought into relations with the family by virtue of his selection as secretary to her father, the general manager, had no means whatever of his own, and his salary, then $60 a month, was a desperately small income on which to begin housekeeping for a girl reared as she had been. But her father helped them, and the young couple counted upon his influence to procure the advancement of his son-in-law to a more remunerative post.

Unfortunately for them, however, Mr. Harris had died a few weeks after their wedding, and they found themselves thrown upon their own resources. Mrs. Harris, a selfish, shallow, unfeeling woman with social pretensions, who regarded her daughter's marriage with the young clerk as a mesalliance and Brooks himself with disdain, left them to shift for themselves and with her other daughter, Beth, who was seven years younger than Emma and shared her mother's views, as she imitated her haughtiness, settled down to the enjoyment of the modest fortune her husband had left her and the indulgence of the ostentation she loved, but which during Mr. Harris' lifetime she had never been able to gratify to the top of her bent. She did not for this, however, withdraw altogether from association with Emma and Brooks and continued on more or less amicable terms with them. Now and then she condescended to call upon them with Beth, but her visits, as a rule, were a good deal of a trial to the young couple, for she regarded Brooks' failure to get on in the steamship company as a vindication of her opinion as to his ability and the judiciousness of their marriage and was prone to condone with her daughter, assume an exasperating I-told-you-so attitude and lament what might have been.

During the four years of their married life Brooks' salary had been raised only $20 a month, although in addition to his work as accountant, to which he had been assigned after Mr. Harris' death, that of collector had been thrust upon him. It had been a hard, bitter experience for pretty little Mrs. Brooks, this unaccustomed drudgery of housework, this continuous scouring of greasy pots and pans and washing of dishes, which she loathed; this deprivation of comforts and luxuries that she had known all her life; this privation of many personal things considered indispensable by the dainty woman; this necessity of perpetual rigid economizing, which barely sufficed to make both ends meet. She deprived herself of much needed clothing, to say nothing of finery, that Joe might go properly clad to his office, but she never for that reason descended to slovenliness, never "let herself go," as so many women in their own households make the mistake of doing, and never had she allowed one word of complaint, one indication of regret, to escape her. She had married Joe for love, for better or for worse, and resigned herself bravely and cheerfully to the consequences, however hard to bear, hoping for the better times that were so long in coming and encouraging her husband to fight on and win.

Joe, for his part, lacked his wife's grit and energy, and constant disappointment had undermined his fortitude. He loved Emma. He hardly could have done otherwise, though calculation had entered largely into his courting of her. Chivalrously, while the sweet bliss of their early married life held him in its spell, he had done as much of the heavier work of the menage as he could to spare her when time and opportunity afforded, but very naturally he had soon tired of this—where is the man who does not?—and by degrees had left as much of it as he could to her, except when his moods of optimism and affectionate solicitude impelled him to go to her assistance. At such times he wanted to do it all.

On the evening following his outburst at the office he was still resentful and "down in the mouth" when he let himself into his little flat, and the smiles of his wife as she raised her rosebud lips to receive his kiss of greeting failed to dispel his gloom.

"You seem out of sorts tonight, dear," she said solicitously. "Anything wrong at the office?"

"Nothing in particular. I'm tired and hungry after slaving all day in this awful bear, that's all."

"Never mind, supper's all ready, so sit down and tuck in."

"What did you get?"

"Chops and potatoes."

Joe turned up his nose, but took his seat at table and began to eat. He answered his wife's questions in monosyllables. His thoughts, it was plain, were not on his meal or Emma's con-

versation, and, seeing
occupied and tr
try to engage his
"I paid the gas bi
safed at length
than last month."
"Ninety cents more
with concern. "I
use half as much
butcher four-sixty."
"Every month
I don't know what
I'm sure."
"I'm sorry, Joe.
try to be as econ
"I know, but it's
wrong that you
your hands with
pans. They weren't
work. I wish we
girl."
"So do I, but w
use of wishing?
raise you asked
for?" she inquired.
"No."
He hung his head
gloomy silence. She
sel she was raising
rose from the table
may, her appetite
Tears of disappoin
realization of what
plans meant, for
that his request
with, and she had
in the air on the
dollars more a
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meant much to the
her husband sitting
jected and crushed,
to him in pity and
over to his chair
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"Never mind, Jo
"don't look so solemn
off than we were
win out some day."
She placed her h
and raised his head
saw that she was
couragingly through
fused to be comforted
"I made out the
said. "Three other
who also asked for
got it; so did Smith."
"What, Jimsy?" she
"I said Smith
Smith in the office
what surlily.
"Well, I'm glad he
got what he wanted."
"I think he told
across with more
"How much did he
"Eighteen hundred
"Eighteen hundred
isn't that fine?"
"It means that he
ly $5,000 a year
isn't it?"
"Yes, indeed it is."
"I saw Jimsy to
come to supper.
he could."
"I wonder why he
Her husband did
ately. When he did
agely:
"Suppose he thought
ford it. Two dol
three."
"Why, Joe, how
ed, beginning to
plates. "Jimsy kno
"That's the trouble
your mother knows
everybody knows,
talking about how
and slave because
all that sort of stuff
"Jimsy doesn't."
"Well, he thinks
er's always rubbing
the same old string
thy of you, that it's
you have to work
don't seem to get
you"—
"Oh, don't mind
her."
"She never did
"But dear old
the one I wanted
Joe, of course.
peculiar. I'm sure
stand me much,
that I don't under
won't bother about
up a bit, will you
dishes? Jimsy may
Brooks went into the
an apron from
into him by his wife
his clothes, and
carpet broom and
was laboring under
manifest by the
which he used the
with an expression
he said in a firm
"Emma, you know
months or a year
chance at a raise
quit and get a job
was thinking that
and want to call it
"Call what off?"
"Why, everything
ness. I mean our
desperately.
Her eyes opened
lous astonishment.
"You mean separ
"That's exactly
"What for—because
"Something like
"What an idea!
blues badly to
that. Don't you
well to wait until
"You have com
"No—at least I
"Not in words
"But what?"
"Look here," he
"don't you suppose
you suppose I have
—I know that
drudgery and all
and There's
tive sand—he
You could have"—
She interrupted
face flushing.

(Continued