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The Manager Of the B. & A. By VAUGHAN KESTER. Copyright, 1901, by Harper & Brothers.

(Continued from last week) "Well, men, what do you want?" he asked briskly. "We represent every department in the shops, sir," said Bentick civilly.



"I don't wish to make him a scapegoat for the rest of you."

ness he swung himself up into an empty flat car which stood close at hand and faced his assembled workmen. "You know why Branyon was dismissed. It was a business none of you have much reason to be proud of."

He avoided looking at McClintock's direction. He felt rather than saw that the latter was shaking his head in strong disapproval of his course.

Dan set his lips and said sternly, but quietly, "That's for him to decide." "Well, we'll tell him what you say, and if he's ready to eat humble pie there won't be no kick coming from us," remarked Bentick impatiently.

"We want our old wages," insisted Bentick doggedly. "It is out of the question. The shops are running behind. They are not paying any money they never have, and it's as much to your interests as mine of General Carlish's to do your full part in making those payments."

He jumped down from the car and would have left them then and there, but Bentick stopped in front of him. "Don't we talk it over, Mr. Oakley?" "There is nothing to talk over, Bentick. Settle it among yourselves."

The first emotion of the men was one of incredulity and hesitating surprise as they thought of what Bentick had just said. The man's tone and his evident self-possession, however the strike, a man who had just returned on a double time train.

"We'll call his bluff!" cried Bentick, and the men gave a faint cheer. They were not so sure it was a bluff after all. It looked real enough.

There were those who thought with a guilty pang of wives and children at home and no pay day, the fortnightly haven of rest toward which they lived. And there were the customarily reckless souls, who thirsted for excitement at any price and who were willing to see the trouble to a finish.

At length all agreed to strike, and the whistle in the shops was set shrieking its dismal protest. The men swarmed into the building, where each got to gather his kit of tools.

McClintock came from the office and entered the works, pulling the big doors to after him. He wanted to see that all was made snug. He cursed loudly as he strode through the deserted building.

The place held a dreadful, ghostly interest. The belts and shafting, with its innumerable cogs and connections reached out like the heavy knuckled tentacles of some great lifeless monster.

"When do you suppose I'll get a chance to build steam again, Milt?" "Oakley says we won't start up before the first of September."

CHAPTER XV THE first session of the strike closed by without excitement. However, time came and went. A restless Alvinne loitered in the yard and sought the tracks with its head, and it being impossible to vary the monotony of its life, it sought a quiet spot on the side of the road.

It is a rumour was given out that Oakley was on the verge of settling up with himself and the men, dividing the watches, men with train, but only familiar with the usual business of the yard.

The political campaign had started, and Kenyon was booked to speak in Antioch. It was understood in advance that he would declare for the strikers, and his coming caused a very great flutter of excitement.

The brass band lived for the occasion, discoursed patriotic airs, as Kenyon in a loud, clear voice and a long, sustained note presided himself at the door of the speaker. The great man was all business and serious as they stood in this crowd and looked from every pore.

The crowd on the platform gave a faint, unenthusiastic cheer as it caught sight of him. It had been more interested in staring at Bentick and Stokes. They looked so excessively uncomfortable.

Mr. Kenyon climbed down the steps and shook hands with Mr. Ryder. Then, bowing and smiling to the right and left, he crossed the platform, leaning on the editor's arm. At the carriages there were more greetings.

After supper the statesman was surrounded by the band, and a little later the members of the Young Men's Kenyon club, attired in cotton flannel uniforms, marched across from the Herald office to escort him to the rink.

Mr. Kenyon, smiling his unwearied, mirthless smile, seated himself in his carriage. Mr. Ryder, slightly bored and wholly cynical, followed his example. Mr. Stokes and Mr. Bentick, perspiring and abject and looking for all the world like two criminals, dropped dejectedly into the places assigned them.

Since an early hour of the evening the people had been gathering at the rink. It was also the opera house, where during the winter months an occasional repertory company appeared in "East Lynne," "The New Magdalen" or Tom Robertson's "Caste."

Presently out of the distance drifted the first strains of the band. A little later Cap Roberts and the Hon. Job Barrows appeared on the makeshift stage from the wings. There was an applause murmur, for the Hon. Job was a popular character. It was said of him that he always carried a map of the United States in tobacco juice on his shirt front.

It was generally agreed afterward that it had been a great privilege to hear Kenyon. No one knew exactly what it was all about, but that was a minor consideration. The congressman was well on toward the end of his speech and had reached the local situation, which he was handling in what the Herald subsequently described as "a masterly fashion, cool, logical and convincing."

Dan listened idly, hearing only a word now and then. At length a sentence reached him. The speaker was addressing the men in regard to their strike. He had barely and turned to leave. He had heard enough, but some one cried out, "Horse Oakley!" and instantly every one in the place was staring at him.

Kenyon took a step nearer the footlights. Either he misunderstood or else he wished to provoke an argument, for he said, with slippery civility, "I shall be pleased to listen to Mr. Oakley's side of the question. This is a free country, and I don't deny him or any man the right to express his views. The fact that I am unalterably opposed to the power he represents is no bar."

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