

A REUNION

A LABOR DAY STORY

By ARTHUR PRICE

The Labor day procession was coming down the street. The first man in it was six feet four inches tall, with a bearskin hat on his head that raised him to seven feet. He was the drum major of the band and was twirling his big silver headed staff and throwing it into the air with fine jugglery. Behind him came the band and then the man of most real importance, the grand marshal, followed by his aids. Then came the different unions marching in line, every man looking happy on this clear September day that he could lay aside his hammer or his trowel or whatever tool best represented his trade and step out to the inspiring strains of martial music.

Among those who lined the sidewalks, occupied the steps of the buildings and climbed the lampposts along the line of march was a certain Mrs. O'Toole, who had recently come over from Ireland. With her was her son, Daniel, six years old. The mother was standing with the crowd on the curb, but Danny was perched with a leg on each side of a horizontal piece of iron under the lamp, straining his eyes to catch the first glimpse of sunlight that would strike the brass horns of the band.

"They're comin', mother!" he shouted, wild with excitement. Every eye

within hearing of the boy's voice was turned in the direction he was looking. True enough, a line of mounted police wheeled around a corner, and in another moment the strains of music were heard in the distance. Danny kept his mother informed of each appearance as it was revealed to him and was not a little proud to think that there were those in the crowd directly beneath him who were benefiting by his information.

"Oh, mother, there's a giant with a woolly dog on his head throwin' up a big stick. Reckon he's runnin' the whole business."

"Oh, mother, you'd oughter see the man on a horse with a whole lot o' other men on horses. They've all got broad white things over their shoulders and hold round sticks in their hands with ribbons round 'em."

The big horns grew hoarser, the bass drum pounded louder, the piccolo shrilled harder, as the columns advanced. When mounted police riding abreast came a man on the sidewalk interested in Danny's description and his eagerness that his mother should see it all handed her a soap box on which he had been standing and bade her mount it. She thanked him and, stepping up, had a fine view of those passing in the street, much to Danny's satisfaction.

The drum major passed, the band passed, the grand marshal and his aids passed. Then came the Carpenters' union, the Plumbers' union and the Masons' union.

"Oh, Danny," cried Mrs. O'Toole, "there's your father!"

Now, Danny O'Toole had known ever since he was old enough to know anything that his father had left him and his mother in Ireland when Danny was

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a baby to come to America. He was to send money home and when he got enough together to send for his wife and boy he would do so. For awhile letters had come from him; then they had ceased. His wife had come to America to look for him.

"Which?" cried Danny.

"The man on the far side, him with the red head. Call him."

Danny, knowing only one way to attract his parent's attention, shouted "Red head!" with all the power of his little lungs. The man heard him and, turning his head, saw a kid on a lamppost waving his hat at him. Then, lowering his eyes, he saw his wife looking in his direction. Leaving the ranks, he came across the street, elbowed his way through the crowd to his wife, and she fell into his arms.

Meanwhile Danny, feeling that he was not getting his share in this family reunion, dropped down on to his father with one leg on each shoulder. His father pulled him down into his arms.

"The child?" asked O'Toole.

"Yes, it's Danny."

Danny got a hug that made him cry out, and, drawing off as far as he could, he punched his higger with his little fist.

"Don't you hurt me that way ag'in!" he said fiercely.

"Oh, Danny," said Mrs. O'Toole, laughing through her tears, "your father's so glad to see you."

That ended the O'Toole family's interest in the Labor day procession. O'Toole went with his wife and boy to their rooms, where he explained his

long silence. He had been suddenly taken ill and attacked with loss of memory. It had partially returned to him, and he had written his wife, but she had already left Ireland for America.

O'Toole was getting on his feet again when his wife and boy were restored to him, and it was not long before he was able to make them comfortable.

That was a number of years ago. Since then Danny O'Toole has grown to be a stalwart young fellow, has learned his trade and can swing a sledgehammer with any man. And when labor processions march down the street between admiring crowds Danny is sure to be among them. And he takes a greater interest in the day because it is the anniversary of his first meeting with his father in America and of the family reunion.

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