A DAY WITH A TRAMP AND OTHER DAYS

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BY

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PREFACE

THE following narratives, like those published in the series of "The Workers," East and West, are drawn from notes taken during an expedition made ten years ago. In the summer of 1891 I began an experiment of earning my living as a day laborer and continued it until, in the course of eighteen months, I had worked my way from Connecticut to California.

In justice to the narratives it should be explained that they are submitted simply for what they are, the casual observations of a student almost fresh from college whose interest in life led him to undertake a work for which he had no scientific training.

W. A. W.

PRINCETON, October, 1901.

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HE was an American of Irish stock; his name was Farrell; he was two-and-twenty, a little more than six feet high, and as straight as an arrow. We met on the line of the Rock Island Railway just west of Morris, Ill.

But first, I should like to explain that in the course of eighteen months' experience as a wandering wage-earner, drifting from the Atlantic to the Pacific, this was the only day that I spent in company with a tramp.

It was in the character of a workingman and not as a tramp, that I began, in the summer of 1891, a casual experiment, by which I hoped to gain some personal acquaintance with the conditions of life of unskilled laborers in America. Having no skill, I could count on employment only in the rudest forms of labor,

and I maintained consistently the character of a laborer—a very indifferent one, I am bound to own—yet finding it possible everywhere to live by the work of my hands.

I did tramp, it is true, walking in all some twenty-five hundred miles of the distance from Connecticut to California; but I did it from set purpose, discovering that in this way I could get a better knowledge of the people and the country and of opportunities for work, than if I should spend my savings in car-fare from place to place. It cost me nothing to walk, and I not infrequently covered two hundred miles in the course of a week, but it generally proved that, in actual cash from the savings of my last job, I was out quite as much as I should have been had I ridden the distance. This was because it was often necessary to pay for food and lodging by the way, an odd job not always being procurable, and the people being far readier to give a meal than to take the trouble of providing work in payment for it. I could little blame them, and I soon began to make use of the wayside inns, trusting for contact with people more to chance

acquaintance and the admirable opportunities that came with every event of employment, when my savings were gone.

Tramp is a misnomer, I fancy, as descriptive of the mode of motion of the members of the professionally idle class which in our vernacular we call *hoboes*. The tramp rarely tramps; he "beats his way" on the railroads.

Everyone knows of the very thorough-going and valuable work that Mr. Josiah Flynt has done in learning the vagrant world, not only of America, but of England, and widely over the Continent as well, and the light that he has let in upon the habits of life and of thought of the fraternity, and its common speech and symbols, and whence its recruits come, and why, and how it occupies a world midway between lawlessness and honest toil, lacking the criminal wit for the one and the will power for the other.

That the hobo, in going from place to place, makes little use of the highways, I can freely testify, so far as my limited experience goes. His name was legion among the unemployed

in Chicago, and he flocked about railway centres, but he was a rare bird along the country roads where work was plentiful.

It is easy to recount individually all that I met: a lusty Yankee beggar who hailed me as a brother one blistering July day, not far from the Connecticut border, when I was making for Garrisons; a cynical wraith, who rose, seemingly, from the dust of the road, in the warm twilight of a September evening, in eastern Pennsylvania and scoffed at my hope of finding work in Sweet Valley; a threadbare, white-haired German with a truly fine reserve and courtesy, who so far warmed to me, when we met in the frosty air of late November, on the bare, level stretch of a country road between Cleveland and Sandusky, as to tell me that he had walked from Texas, and was on his way to the home of friends near Boston; then Farrell, in central Illinois; and finally, a blear-eyed, shaggy knave, trudging the sleepers of the Union Pacific in western Nebraska, his rags bound together and bound on with strings, and a rollicking quality in his cracked voice, who must have had difficulty in avoid-

ing work among the short-handed gangs of navvies along the line.

All this is by way of fruitless explanation that I myself was not a tramp, but a workman, living by day's labor; a fruitless explanation, because a reputation once established is difficult to dislodge. I have grown accustomed to references to my "tramp days," even among those who knew my purpose best, and I had no sooner returned to my university than I found that to its members I was already known as "Weary," in which alliterative appellation I saw the frankest allusion to a supposed identification with the "Weary Willies" of our "comic" prints. And having incurred the name, I may as well lay bare the one day that I tramped with a tramp.

I am not without misgivings in speaking of Farrell as a tramp. He had held a steady job some weeks before, and our day together ended as we shall see; but if I was a hobo, so was he, and although clearly not of the strictest sect, and perhaps of no true sect at all, yet let us grant that, for the time, we both were tramps.

The line of a railway was an unusual course, for I much preferred the country roads as offering better walking, and far more hope of meeting the people that I wished to know. Heavy rains, however, had made the roads almost impassable on foot, and I was walking the sleepers from necessity.

The spring of 1892 had been uncommonly wet. The rains set in about the time that I quit work with a gang of roadmakers on the Exposition grounds. So incessant were they that it grew difficult to leave Chicago on foot, and when, in the middle of May, I did set out, I got only as far as Joliet, when I had to seek employment again.

At the yards of the Illinois Steel Company I was taken on and assigned to a gang of laborers, mostly Hungarians. But my chief association of a week's stay there is with a boarding-house, and especially its landlady.

She was a girlish matron, with a face that made you thing of a child-wife, but she was a woman in capacity. Her baby was a year old, and generous Heaven was about to send another. Her boarders numbered seven when

I was made welcome; and to help her in the care of a crippled husband and the child and guests, she had a little maid of about fifteen, while, to add to the income from our board, she took in all our washing, and did it herself with no outside help. She may have been twenty, but I should have guessed eighteen, and every man of us stood straight before her and did her bidding thankfully.

It was a proud moment, and one which made me feel more nearly on equal terms with the other men, when one evening she came to me and,

"John, you mind the baby this time while I finish getting supper," she said, as she put the child in my arms.

On the sofa in the sitting-room we would lay the little wide-eyed, sunny creature whom we rarely heard cry, and who never showed fear at the touch of our rough hands, nor at the thundering laughter that answered to her smiles and her gurgling attempts at speech.

The mother waited at the table, and joined freely in our talk. She had a way of saying "By gosh!" that fairly broke your heart, and

at times she would stand still and swear softly, while her deep blue eyes widened in innocent surprise.

They were haunting eyes, and they followed me far out on the rain-soaked roads of the valley of the Illinois. The walking was not bad at first. Over a rolling country the way wound past woodland and open fields, between banks of rank turf and wild flowers; and, but for the evident richness of soil, and the entire absence of rock, it might have been a New England valley with nothing to suggest the earlier monotony of undulating prairie.

But the walking became steadily worse, until by nightfall each step was a painful pulling of a foot out of the mire then planting it in the mire ahead, with Morris a good ten miles beyond. I was passing in the late twilight a farm-house that stood close to the road. In his shirt-sleeves, and seated in a tilted chair on the porch, was a young farmer with a group of lightly clad children about him. He accepted the explanation that I found the walking too heavy to admit of my reaching Morris that evening, and, readily giv-

ing me leave to sleep on his hay-mow, asked me in to have something to eat.

I was struck at first sight with a marked resemblance in him to my friend Fitz-Adams, the manager of the logging camp in Pennsylvania. All through our talk, while seated on the porch in the evening, there were reminders in his manner and turns of speech and ways of looking at things of that very efficient boss.

He was living in apparent poverty. The house was small and slightly built and meanly furnished. Indeed, there was an effect of squalor in its scant interior, and in the unkempt appearance of his wife and children. But the man impressed you with the resolute reserve of one who bides his time and knows what he is about. It appeared in his evident contentment, joined with a certain hopefulness that was very engaging. It is true that the spring was wet, so wet that he had not yet been able to plant his corn, and it was growing late for planting, but, even if the crop should fail completely, he had much corn in the best condition, he said, left over from the uncom-

monly large crop of the year before, which would be selling in the autumn at a better price. He was depressed by the persistent rains, but not discouraged, and, as for the region in which he had cast his lot, he clearly thought it one of the best for a man beginning the world as a farmer. With land at fifty dollars an acre, there was a good market near at hand, and money on the security of the land could be had at five per cent. It was best to buy, he said. Four thousand dollars would secure a farm of eighty acres, and two hundred dollars would pay the interest, whereas the rental might reach three hundred or even three hundred and fifty. Unmistakably he was poor, but he was certainly not of the complaining sort, and I thought that it did not require a long look into the future to see him in full possession of the land and the owner of a more comfortable home besides.

When the barn-yard fowls wakened me in the morning the sun was rising to a cloudless dawn. But, by the time that I took to the road, all the sky was overcast again, and progress was as difficult as on the night before.

The stoneless soil was saturated, until it could absorb not another drop, and water formed a pool in every foot-print and ran in muddy streams in the wheel-tracks.

Two miles down the road was a railway. I reached it after an hour's hard walk and followed it to the tow-path of a canal, which afforded comparatively firm footing over the remaining eight miles into Morris. It was now ten o'clock, and for the past hour a steady drizzle had been falling, which increased to a down-pour as I entered the town. There I remained sheltered until nearly noon, when the rain ceased and I renewed the journey. The roads I knew by experience to be almost impassable, so I found the line of the Rock Island Railway and started west in the hope of reaching Ottawa by night.

Dense clouds lay heavily upon the fields that stood, many of them, deep in water. The moist air was hot and sluggish, but under foot was the hard road-bed, and the course was the straightest that could be cut to the Mississippi. The line was a double one, and the gutter between formed a good cinder-track, so that I

had not to measure the distance from sleeper to sleeper at every step, which grows to be a horrible monotony.

I had cleared the town by two miles or more and was settling to the swing of a long walk when I saw, not far ahead, a gang of navvies at work; almost at the same moment there appeared, emerging from the fog beyond, the figure of a man. We were about equally distant from the gang, and I had passed the workmen only a few yards when we met. The impression grew as he drew near that here was a typical tramp, and, being unaccustomed to his order and its ways, I wondered how we should fare, if thrown together. But if I recognized him as a tramp, he had done as much by me; for, when we met, he hailed me as a *confrère* with,

"Hello, partner! which way?"

"I'm going to Ottawa," I said.

"How long will you hold Ottaway down?" he asked.

"Oh, I'm only passing through on my way to Davenport."

That was enough for Farrell as evidence of

my being a hobo, however raw a recruit; but there was a certain courtesy of the road which he wished to maintain, if he could, in the face of my awkward ignorance. I was conscious of an embarrassment which I could not understand.

"How far is it to Morris?" he asked next, and the opening should have been enough for any man, but I answered dully, with painful accuracy as to the distance that I had come.

Clearly nothing would penetrate such density but the frankest directness, so out he blurted:

"Well, partner, if you don't mind, I'll go with you."

Light dawned upon me then, and I tried to make up in cordiality for a want of intuition. Embarrassment was gone at once, and with an ease, as of long acquaintance, Farrell began to tell me how that, on the day before, he had lost his partner and for twenty-four hours had been alone. The loneliness was a horror to him, from which he shrunk, even in the telling, and he expanded, in the companionship of a total stranger, like a flower in light and warmth.

Without a moment's hesitation he abandoned the way toward Morris and turned back upon his former course, with a light-heartedness at having a partner that was highly flattering.

Here certainly was life reduced to simple terms. As we stood at meeting on the railway line, Farrell was as though he had no single human tie with a strong hold upon him. The clothes that covered him were his only possessions, and a toss of a coin might well determine toward which point of the compass he would go. The casual meeting with a new acquaintance was enough to give direction to an immediate plan and to change the face of nature.

There was trouble in his blue eyes when we met, the fluttering, anxious bewilderment that one sees in the eyes of a half-frightened child. It was an appeal for relief from intolerable loneliness; all his face brightened when we set off together. He had the natural erectness of carriage which gives a distinction of its own, and, apart from a small, weak mouth, slightly tobacco-stained, and an ill-defined chin, he was good to look at, with his straight nose and well

set eyes and generous breadth of forehead, the thick brown hair turning gray about it and adding to his looks a good ten years above his actual two-and-twenty. A faded coat was upon his arm and he wore a flannel shirt that had once been navy blue, and ragged trousers, and a pair of boots, through rents in which his bare feet appeared. A needle was stuck through the front of his shirt, and the soiled white cotton with which it was threaded was wound around the cloth within the projecting ends.

However accustomed to "beating his way," instead of going on foot, Farrell may have been, he was a good walker. Stretching far ahead was the level reach of the road-bed, with the converging lines of rails disappearing in the mist. Our muscles relaxed in the hot, unmoving air, until we struck the gait which becomes a mechanical swing with scarcely a sense of effort. Then Farrell was at his best. Snatches of strange song fell from him and remembered fragments of stage dialogue with little meaning and with no connection, but all expressing his care-free mood. It was con-

tagious. Oh, but the world was wide and fair, and we were young and free, and vagabond and unashamed! Walt Whitman was our poet then, but I did not tell Farrell so; for the new, raw wine of life was in his veins, and he sang a song of his own.

A breeze sprang up from the west, and the heavy mists began to move, but from out the east great banks of clouds rose higher with the sound of distant thunder, which drew nearer, until spattering raindrops fell, fairly hissing on the hot rails. No shelter was at hand; when the storm broke it came with vindictive fury and drenched us in a few moments. We walked on with many looks behind to make sure of not being run down, for we could scarcely have heard the approach of a train in the almost unbroken peals of thunder that nearly drowned our shouts. Then the shower passed; the thunder grew distant and faint again, and from a clear sky the sun shone upon us with blistering heat, through air as still and heavy and as surcharged with electricity as before the storm.

Farrell had been quite indifferent to the

rain, accepting it with a philosophic unconcern that was perfect. There was certainly little cause to complain, for in half an hour our clothing was dry; meantime the expression of his mood was changed. He had been friendly before, but impersonal; now he wished to get into closer touch.

"Where are you from, partner?" he asked.

"I worked last winter in Chicago," I said.

"What at?"

"Trucking in a factory for awhile, then with a road-gang on the Fair Grounds. I had a job in Joliet, but I quit in a week," I concluded. I was short, for I knew that this was merely introductory, and that Farrell was fencing for an opening.

"I've been on the road seven weeks now, looking for a job, and, in that time, I ain't slept but two nights in a bed," he began.

"Two nights in a bed out of forty-nine?" I asked.

"Yes. In that time I've beat my way out to Omaha and back to Lima and up and down; and one night a farmer near Tiffin, Ohio, give me a supper and let me sleep in a bed in his

wagon-house, and one wet night in Chicago I had the price of a bunk in me jeans, and I says to meself, says I, ' I'd sooner sleep dry to-night than get drunk.' "

It came then of itself, needing only an occasional prompting question, and the narrative was essentially true, I fancy; for, free from embellishment, it moved with the directness of reality.

Born in Wisconsin of parents who had emigrated from Ireland, Farrell was bred in an Illinois village, about fifty miles north of where we were walking at the time. His two sisters lived there still, he thought, but his mother had died when he was but a lad. His father was a day laborer at work in Peoria, so far as Farrell knew. He had not seen him for many years, and he kept up no contact with his people.

Much the most interesting part of the story to me was that which related to the past year. Farrell was twenty-two; he had grown up he hardly knew how, and was already a confirmed roadster, with an inordinate love for tobacco, and a well-developed taste for drink.

In the early summer he had drifted into Ottawa, the very town that we were nearing, and, being momentarily tired of the road, he sought and found a job in a tile factory. At this point his narrative grew deeply absorbing, because of the unconscious art of it in its simple adherence to life; but being unable to reproduce his words, I can only suggest their import.

It was a crisis in his history. The change began with an experience of a mechanics' boarding-house. He was a vagabond by breeding, with no clearly defined ideas beyond food and drink, and immunity from work. He was awaking to manhood, and there began to dawn for him at the boarding-house a sense of home, and of something more in the motherly care of the housekeeper.

"Say, she was good to me," was his own expression, "she done me proud. She used to mend me clothes, and if I got drunk, she never chewed the rag, but I see it cut her bad, and I swore off for good; and then I used to give her me wages to keep for me, and she'd allow me fifty cents a week above me board."

The picture went on unfolding itself naturally in the portrayal of interests undreamed of beyond idleness, and enough of plug and beer. The savings grew to a little store; then there came the suggestion of a new suit of clothes, and a hat and boots, and a boiled shirt and collar, and a bright cravat. Farrell little thought of the native touch of art in his description of how, when all these were procured, he would fare forth on a Sunday morning, not merely another man, but other than anything that he had imagined. A sense of achievement came and brought a dawning feeling of obligation, and a desire to take standing with other men, and to know something and to bear a part in the work of a citizen of the town.

Some glimmer had remained to him of religious teaching before his mother died, and, in the conscious virtue of new dress, he sought out the church, and began to go regularly to mass.

I knew what was coming then; there had been an inevitableness that foretold it in the tale, and I found myself breathing more freely

when he began to speak without self-consciousness of the girl.

He said very little of her, but it was not at all difficult to catch the ampler meaning of his words. Sunday began to hold a new interest, quite apart from Sunday clothes. He found himself looking forward through the week to a glimpse of her at church, but the week was far too long, and in the autumn evenings he would dress himself in his best, regardless of the jeers of the other men, and would walk past her father's corner grocery. Sometimes he saw her on the pavement in front of the shop, or helping her father to wait on customers within.

All this was very disturbing; a new world had opened to him with a steady job. It was unfolding itself with quite wonderful revelations in the home-life of his boarding-house, and the friendship of the matron, and the companionship of other workingmen, and the responsibility which was beginning to replace his former recklessness. Moreover, he was getting on in the tile factory. He was strong and active, and the chances of being trans-

ferred to piece-work was a spur to do his best at his present unskilled labor. Utterly unforeseen in its train of consequences had come into this budding consciousness, the vision of a girl. He had merely seen her at church, then seen her again, then found himself looking forward to sight of her, and unable to wait patiently for Sunday. The very thought of her carried with it a feeling of contempt for his former life, and a distressing sense of difference in their present stations, which developed, sometimes, into the temptation to go back to the road and forget. That was the temptation that was always in the background, and always coming to the fore when the craving for drink was strongest, or when the monotony of ten hours' daily labor grew more than commonly burdensome. For four months and more he had resisted now, and, as a reward, he had become just man enough to know feebly that he could not easily forget, even on the road.

How he plucked up courage to meet her I do not know, for he did not tell me, and not for treasure would I have asked him at this

point of the story. He did meet her, however, and the wonder of it was upon him still, as he told me modestly, in quaint speech, that she smiled upon him.

Oh, ineffable mystery of life, that he, a hobo of a few months before, should be reading now in a good girl's eyes an answering liking to his own! He was little more than a lad, and she but a slip of a girl, and I do not know what it may have meant to her, but to him it was life from the dead. Very swiftly the winter sped and very hard he worked until he earned a job at piecework in the factory, and then harder than ever until he was making good wages. He could see little of her, for she had an instinctive knowledge of her father's probable displeasure, but there grew up a tacit understanding between them that kept his hope and ambition fired.

Nothing in experience could have been more wonderful than those winter months, when he felt himself getting a man's grip of things unutterable, that came as from out a boundless sea into the range of his strange awakening. And this new life was centred in her, as

though she were its source. He lived for her, and worked and thought for her and tried to be worthy of her, and between his former and his present life was a gulf which by some miracle she had created.

It came upon him with the suddenness of a pistol-shot one evening late in March when they stood talking for a moment before saying good-night at her father's door. Thundering down the steps from the living rooms over the shop rushed the grocer, a large, florid Irishman. In a moment he was upon them, hot in the newly acquired knowledge that Farrell was "keeping steady company" with his daughter. His ire was up, and his Irish tongue was loosed, and Farrell got the sting of it. It lashed him for a beggarly factory laborer of doubtful birth, and, gaining vehemence, it lashed him for a hobo predestined to destruction, and finally, with strong admonition, it charged him never to speak to the girl and never to enter her home again.

If only he could have known, if only there had been a voice to tell him convincingly that now there had come a crucial test in his life

between character and circumstance, a voice "to lift him through the fight"! But all his past was against him. In another hour he was dead drunk and he went drunk to work in the morning, and was discharged.

The pleading of his landlady was of no avail. He thought that he had lost the girl. Nothing remained but the road, and back to the road he would go, and soon, with his savings in his pocket, he was "beating his way" to Chicago. There he could live on beer and free lunches, and, at dives and brothels, he would "blow in" the savings of ten months and try to forget how sacred the sum had seemed to him, when, little by little, he added to it, while planning for the future. Its very sacredness gave a hellish zest to utter abandonment to vice while the money lasted; then he took again to begging on the streets with "a hard-luck story," until, in the warm April days, he felt the old drawing to the open country and began once more to "beat his way" up and down the familiar railway lines and to beg his bread from the kind-hearted folk, who, in feeding him, were fast completing his ruin.

We were entering Seneca now, and another thunder-storm was upon us, but, as it broke in a deluge of rain, we ran for shelter under the eaves of the railway station. A west-bound passenger-train drew in as we stood there.

"That's the way to travel," I heard Farrell say, half to himself. It was the sheltered comfort of the passengers that he envied, I supposed. But not at all.

"See that hobo?" he continued, and, following the line of his outstretched finger, I saw a ragged wretch dripping like a drowned rat as he walked slowly up and down beside the panting locomotive.

"Yes," I answered.

"The train's got a blind baggage-car on," he continued. "That's a car that ain't got no door in the end that's next the engine. You can get on the front platform when the train starts, and the brakemen can't reach you till she stops, but then you're off before they are and on again when she starts up. The fireman can reach you all right, and if he's ugly, he'll heave coal at you, and sometimes he'll kick you off when the train's going full

speed; but generally he lets you be. That hobo come in two hours from Chicago and he's got a snap for as long as he wants to ride," he concluded.

Nevertheless, I was glad to see the train go without Farrell's saying anything about joining our adventurous brother on the fore-platform of the "blind baggage-car."

In the seething sunlight that followed the storm we left the station and walked along the village street which lay parallel with the railway. At a mineral spring we stopped to drink, while a group of school-children who were loitering homeward stood watching us, the fascination in their eyes which all children feel in the mystery which surrounds the lives of vagabonds and gypsies.

On the outskirts of the village, when we were about to resume the railway, Farrell suggested that he should go foraging. He was hungry, for he had eaten nothing since early morning, while I had bought food at Morris. I promised to wait for him and very gladly sat down on the curbstone in the shade.

Two bare-foot urchins, their trousers rolled

up to their knees, who had evidently been watching us from behind a picket-fence, stole stealthily out of the gate when Farrell turned the corner. Creeping as near as they dared, they gathered a handful of small, sun-baked clods and began to throw them at me as a target. It was rare sport for a time, but I was beyond their range and much absorbed in Farrell's story. Disappointed at not having the excitement of being chased back to the shelter of their yard, they gave up the game and seated themselves on the curb, with their naked, brown feet bathed in the pool which had formed in the gutter. I had become quite unconscious of them, when I suddenly realized that they were in warm discussion. It was about me, I found, for I heard one of them raise his voice in stern insistence.

"Naw," he said, "that ain't the same bum, that's another bum!"

Farrell returned empty-handed and a trifle dejected, I thought. His mind was evidently on food. A little farther down the line he pointed out a farm-house to the right and suggested our trying there. Along the edge of a

soft meadow, where the damp grass stood high, nearly ready for mowing, we walked to a muddy lane which led to the barn-yard. A lank youth in overalls tucked into top-boots and a gingham shirt and a wide-brimmed straw hat stood in the open doorway of the barn, calmly staring at us as we approached.

Farrell greeted him familiarly and was answered civilly. Then, without further parley, he explained that we were come for something to eat.

"Go up to the house and ask the boss," said the hired man.

The farmer was plainly well-to-do. His house was a large, square, white-painted, wooden structure topped with a cupola, and with well-kept grounds about it, while the farm buildings wore a prosperous air of plenitude. Just then a well-grown watch-dog of the collie type came walking toward us across the lawn, a menacing inquiry in his face.

"Won't you go?" suggested Farrell.

The hired man had caught sight of the dog, and there was a twinkle in his eye as he answered, airily,

"Oh, no, thank you."

"Does the dog bite?" Farrell ventured, cautiously.

"Yes," came sententiously from the hired man.

"We'd better get back to the road," Farrell said to me, and we could feel amused eyes upon us as we retraced our steps to the track.

Once more Farrell tried his luck; this time at a meagre, wooden, drab cottage that faced a country lane, a hundred yards from the railway. I watched him from the line and noticed that he talked for some time with the woman who answered his knock and stood framed in the door.

When he returned he had two large slices of bread in his hand and some cold meat.

"I didn't like to take it," he remarked. "Her husband's a carpenter and ain't had no work for six weeks. But she says she couldn't have me go away hungry. That's the kind that always helps you, the kind that's in hard luck themselves, and knows what it is."

He was for sharing the forage and, hungry as he was, he had not eaten a morsel of it when

he rejoined me. That I would take none seemed to him at first a personal slight, but he understood it better when I explained that I had had food at Morris.

There was a cloudless sunset that evening, the sun sinking in a crimson glow that foretold another day of great heat. The stars came slowly out over a firmament of slaty blue, and shone obscurely through the humid air. Farrell and I were silent for some time. Both of us had walked about thirty-six miles that day, and were intent on a resting-place. At last we began to catch the glitter of street-lights in Ottawa, and, at sight of them, Farrell's spirits rose. He was like one returning home after long absence. The sound of a church-bell came faintly to us. Farrell held me by the arm.

"You hear that?" he asked.

"Yes."

"That's the Methodist church bell."

I could see his face light up, as though something were rousing the best that was in him.

At the eastern end of the town, and close to

the railway, we came upon a brick-kiln. Farrell was perfectly familiar with his surroundings now, and we stopped for a drink. For some reason the water would not run in the faucet, so we went around to a barn-like building in the rear. Through a large, open doorway he entered, while I remained outside. Soon I heard him in conversation with someone, who proved to be the night-watchman, and, finding that Farrell was not likely to rejoin me soon, I also entered.

Some moments were necessary to accustom one's eyes to the interior, but I could see at once the figure of a white-bearded old man lying at full length on a bed of gunny-sacks thrown over some sloping boards. His head was propped up, and he held a newspaper which he had been reading by the light of two large torches that hung suspended near him, and from which columns of black smoke rose, curling upward into dark recesses among the rafters. Everything was black with smut and grimy dust. Soon I could see that on one side were great heaps of coal that sloped away to the outer walls like the talus against a cliff.

Farrell was seated on a coal-heap, and was absorbed in the news of the town, as he gathered it from the old man. Quite unnoticed, I sat down on a convenient board and listened dreamily, hoping heartily the while that we should not have to go much further that night.

Presently I found myself alert to what was being said, for they were discussing the question of a night's lodging. It was from the watchman that the suggestion came that we should remain where we were, and very readily we agreed. Taking a torch from its socket, he lighted us through a long passage to another room that was used as a carpenter's shop. A carpenter's bench ran the length of it, and the tools lay strewn over its surface. From a corner he drew a few yards of old matting, which he offered to Farrell as a bed; and he found a door off its hinges, which, when propped up at one end as it lay on the floor, made what proved that night a comfortable bed for me. With a promise to call us early, he left us in the dark, and, quickly off with our boots, we wrapped ourselves in our coats and were soon fast asleep.

The watchman was true to his word; for the stars were still shining when Farrell and I, hungry and stiff, set off down the track in the direction of the railway station. His mood was that of the evening before, as though, after long wandering, he was returning to his native place. Recollections of those ten months of sober industry crowded painfully upon him, and he shrunk like a culprit from possible recognition. Yet every familiar sight held a fascination for him. With kindling interest he pointed out the locality of the boarding-house, and again held me by the arm and made me listen, until I, too, could catch the sound of escaping steam at the tile factory where he had worked.

The iron was entering into his soul, but he knew it only as a painful struggle between a desire to return to a life of work and the inertia that would keep him on the road. We walked on, in silence for the most part, under the morning stars that were dimming at the approach of day. When Farrell spoke, it was to reveal, unconsciously, the progress of the struggle within him.

"It ain't no use tryin' for a job; I've been lookin' seven weeks now." That was the lie to smooth the road to vagabondage.

"I'd have a hell of a time to get square in this town again. Everybody that knowed me, knowed I got fired for drinkin'." That was the truth that made strait the gate and narrow the way that led to life.

In a moment of encouragement he spoke of the boarding-house keeper and of her promise to take him back again, if he would return to work; but his thoughts of the girl he kept to himself, and deeply I liked him for it.

We were leaving Ottawa behind. With a sharp curve the railway swept around the base of bluffs that rose sheer on our right from the roadbed, rugged and grim in the twilight, the trees on top darkly outlined against the sky. At our left were the flooded lowlands of the Illinois bottom. We could see the decaying cornstalks of last year's growth just appearing above the water in the submerged fields, and, here and there, a floating out-building which had been carried down by the flood and was caught among the trees.

Was he man enough to hold fast to his chance, or would he allow himself to drift? This was the drama that was unfolding itself there in the dark before the dawn, under frowning banks beside a flooded river, while the silent stars looked down.

We came to another brick-kiln, with its buildings on the bank just above the railway. A light was shining from a shanty window, and a well-worn foot-path led from the road up through the underbrush of the hillside to the shanty door. A night-watchman was making a final round of the kiln to see that all was right before the day's work began.

Farrell stood still for a moment, the struggle fierce within him.

"Let's get a drink of water," he said.

The night-watchman led us to a spring and answered, encouragingly, Farrell's inquiry about a possible job.

"Go up and ask the boss," he said. "He's just finished his breakfast. That's his house," he added, pointing to the shanty with the light in the window.

From the foot of the path I watched Farrell climb to the shanty door and knock. The door opened and the voices of two men came faintly down to me. My hopes rose, for it was not merely a question and a decisive reply, but the give and take of continued dialogue. The suspense had grown to physical suffering, when I saw Farrell turn from the door and begin to descend the path.

I could not see his face distinctly; but, as he drew nearer, I caught its expression of distress. The half-frightened, worried bewilderment that I had noticed on the day before was back in his eyes, as he stood looking into mine, evidently expecting me to speak. I remained silent.

"I've got a job," he said, presently, and I could have struck him for the joy of it.

"Me troubles is just begun, for the whole town knows me for a bum," he added, while his anxious eyes moved restlessly behind frowning brows. I said nothing, but waited until I could catch his eye at rest. Then out it came, a little painfully:

"I'll go to the boarding-house to-night,

when me day's work is done, and put up there, if the missus can take me."

"Good," I said, and I waited again until his gaze was steady upon me.

For a day we had tramped together, and slept together for a night, and, quite of his own accord, he had given me his confidence. We were parting, now that he had found work, and I hoped that I might receive the final mark of his trust, so I waited.

He read my question, and his eyes wandered, but they came back to mine, and he spoke up like a man:

"I can't, till I'm a bit decent again and got some clothes; but I'll hold down me job, and, as soon as I can, I'll go back to her."

A warning whistle blew; Farrell went up the path to take his place in the brick-kiln, and I was soon far down the line in the direction of Utica.

WITH IOWA FARMERS

WITH IOWA FARMERS

SCARCELY a generalization with the least claim to value can be drawn from my superficial contact with the world of manual labor in America. If there is one, it is, that a man who is able and willing to work can find employment in this country if he will go out in real search for it. It may not be well paid, but it need not be dishonest, and it is difficult to conceive of its failing to afford opportunities of making a way to improved position.

And yet, one has no sooner made such a statement than it becomes necessary to qualify it. Suppose that the worker, able and willing to work, is unemployed in a congested labor market, where the supply far exceeds the demand, and suppose that he must remain with his wife and children, since he cannot desert them and has no means of taking them

away. Or imagine him newly landed, thrown upon the streets by an emigrant agency, ignorant of the language and of our methods of work, and especially ignorant of the country itself. To the number of like suppositions there is no end. Actual experience, however, serves to focus the situation. I have stood beside men whom I knew, and have seen them miss the chance of employment because they were so far weakened by the strain of the sweating system that they were incapable of the strain of hard manual labor.

Even at the best, much of the real difficulty is often the subjective one summed up in the sentence of a man who has wide knowledge of wage-earners in America, to whom I once spoke of the surprising ease with which I found employment everywhere, except in larger towns.

"Oh, yes," he replied; "but you forget how little gifted with imagination the people are who commonly form by far the greater number of the unemployed."

It merely serves to show again the futility of generalizing about labor, as though it were

a commodity like any other, sensitive to the play of the law of supply and demand, while supported by a thorough knowledge of markets and the means of reaching quickly those that, for the time, are the most favorable.

The mass which men speak casually of as "labor" is an aggregation of individuals, each with his human ties and prejudices and his congenital weaknesses and strength, and each with his own salvation to work out through difficulties without and within that are little understood from the outside. You may enter his world and share his life, however rigid, sustained by the knowledge that at any moment you may leave it, and your experience, although the nearest approach that you can make, is yet removed almost by infinity from that of the man at your side, who was born to manual labor and bred to it, and whose whole life, physical and mental, has been moulded by its hard realities.

It would be quite true to say that "the problem of the unemployed in America is a problem of the distribution of workers," taking

them from regions where many men are looking for a job, to other regions, where many jobs are looking for a man. But it would be a shallow truth, with little insight into the real condition of multitudes, whose life-struggle is for day's bread and in whom the gregarious instinct is an irresistible gravitation. It is not difficult to show that congestion in an industrial centre, with its accompanying misery, might be relieved by an exodus to country districts, where an unsatisfied demand for hands is chronic. But the human adjustments involved in the change would be beyond all calculation; and, even were they effected, it would be not a little disturbing in the end to find large numbers returning to the town, frankly preferring want with companionship and a sense of being in touch with their time to the comparative plenty and, with it, the loneliness and isolation of country living. A part of the penalty that one pays for attempting to deal with elements so fascinating as those of human nature is in their very incalculability, in the elusive charm of men who develop the best that is in them in spite of cir-

cumstances the most adverse, and in an evasive quality in others who sometimes fail to respond to the best devised plans for their betterment. But human nature never loses its interest, and, as earnest of a good time coming, there are always men in every generation who, through unselfish service of their fellows, have won

> **The faith that meets**
> **Ten thousand cheats,**
> **Yet drops no jot of faith.**

However little the fact may have applied to the actual "problem of the unemployed," it nevertheless was true, as shown in my own experience, that there was a striking contrast throughout the country between a struggle among men for employment and a struggle among employers for men.

Early in the journey I began to note that every near approach to a considerable centre of population was immediately apparent in an increasing difficulty in finding work. I had never a long search in the country or in country villages, and I soon learned to avoid cities, unless I was bent upon another errand than that of employment.

I could easily have escaped Chicago and its crowded labor market. Offers of places in the late autumn as general utility man on farms in northern Ohio and Indiana were plentiful as I passed, and I well knew, during a fortnight's fruitless search for work in Chicago in early winter, that at any time a day's march from the city, or two days' march at most, would take me to regions where the difficulty would quickly disappear. The temptation to quit the experiment altogether, or, at least, to go out to the more hospitable country, was then strong at times; but I could but realize that, in yielding, I should be abandoning a very real phase of the experience of unskilled labor, that of unemployment, and that I should miss the chance of some contact with bodies of organized skilled workmen as well as with the revolutionaries who can be easiest found in our larger towns. So I remained, and for two weeks I saw and, in an artificial way, I felt something of the grim horror of being penniless on the streets of a city in winter, quite able and most willing to work, yet unable to find any steady employment.

With the return of spring I went into the country again, drifting on with no more definite plan than that of going westward until I should reach the Pacific; and here at once was the contrast. Opportunities of work everywhere; with farmers, when one was on the country roads; in brick-kilns, when bad walking drove one to the railway lines.

Farrell, a fellow-tramp for a day on the Rock Island Railway in Illinois, had, for seven weeks, been looking for work from Omaha to Lima and back again, he told me, and yet he got a job near Ottawa in response to his first inquiry; while a few miles farther down the line I, too, was offered work in a brick-kiln at Utica. I did not accept it, only because I had savings enough from my last job to see me through to Davenport.

It was on the afternoon of Saturday, June 4, 1892, that I reached Davenport. I had followed the line of the Rock Island Railway from Morris, sleeping in brick-kilns, and, one night, at Bureau Junction, in a shed by the village church, and I was a bit fagged. I had developed a plan to go to Minneapolis. I

hoped to work the passage as a hand on a river boat.

At the open door of a livery-stable I stopped to ask the way to the office of the steamboat line, attracted, no doubt, by the look of a man who sat just inside. With a kindly face of German type, he was of middle age, a little stout, dressed in what is known as a "business suit," and when he spoke, it was with a trace of German accent.

Mr. Ross is a sufficiently near approach to his name. He was not an Iowa farmer, but he was my first acquaintance in Iowa, and he had things to say about the unemployed. A director in a bank and the owner of a livery-stable, he was owner of I know not what besides, but I know that he was delightfully cordial, and that his hospitality was of a kind to do credit to the best traditions of the West.

He answered my question obligingly, then asked me whether I was looking for a job.

"For if you are," he added, "there's one right here," and he waved his hand expressively in the direction of the stalls at the rear.

This was more than I had bargained for;

it was wholly new to my experience to find work in a town before I even asked for it.

I told him frankly that I was out of employment and that I must find some soon, but that there were reasons, at the moment, why I wished to reached Minneapolis as early as possible.

Being without the smallest gift of mimicry I could not disguise my tongue, and it had been a satisfaction from the first to find that this lack in no way hampered me. I was accepted readily enough as a working-man by my fellows, and my greenness and manner of speech, I had every reason to think, were credited to my being an immigrant of a new and hitherto unknown sort.

"What's your trade?" the men with whom I worked would generally ask me, supposing that clumsiness as a day laborer was accounted for by my having been trained to the manual skill of a handicraft.

"What country are you from?" they inquired, and when I said "Black Rock," which is the point in Connecticut from which I set out, I have no doubt that there came to their

minds visions of an island in distant seas, where any manner of strange artisan might be bred.

What they thought was of little consequence; that they were willing to receive me with naturalness to their companionship as a fellow-workman was of first importance to me, and this was an experience that never failed.

At last I was west of the Mississippi, and, that I might pass as a man of education in the dress of a laborer, was a matter of no note, since men of education in the ranks of workmen have not been uncommon there.

It was plainly from this point of view that Mr. Ross was talking to me. If I was an educated man, it was my own affair. That for a time, at least, I had been living by day's labor was evident from my dress, and it was not unlikely that I was looking for a job. Happening to have a vacant place in the stable, he offered it to me, and, being interested in what I had to say, he led me to speak on of work during the past winter in Chicago, and my slight association there with the unemployed and with men of revolutionary ideas.

Before I knew it, we were drifting far down a stream of talk, and time was flying. Six months' living in close intimacy with what is saddest and often cruelest, in the complex industrialism of a great city had produced a depression, which I had not shaken off in three weeks' sojourn in the wholesome country. I was steeped in the views of men who told me that things could never grow better until they had grown so much worse that society would either perish or be reorganized. The needed change was not in men, they agreed, but in social conditions; and from every phase of Socialism and Anarchy, I had heard the propaganda of widely varying changes, all alike, however, prophesying a regenerated society, the vision of which alone remained the hope and faith of many lives.

The pent-up feelings of six months found a sympathetic response in Mr. Ross; the more so as I discovered in him a wholly different point of view. He had no quarrel with conditions in America. As a lad of fourteen he came from Germany and, having begun life here without friends or help of any kind, he was

now, after years of work and thrift, a man with some property and with many ties, not the least of which was a love for the country which had given him so good a chance.

The mere suggestion of a programme of radical change roused him. He began somewhat vehemently to denounce a class of men, foreigners, many of them, strangers to our institutions, irresponsible for the most part, who bring with them from abroad revolutionary ideas which they spread, while enjoying the liberities and advantages of the nation that they try to harm.

"Why don't they stay in their own countries and 'reform' them?" he added. "Thousands of men who have come here from the Old World have raised themselves to positions of honor and independence and wealth as they never could have done in their native lands. And yet these disturbers would upset it all, a system that for a hundred years and more we have tried and found not wanting.

"I am interested in a local bank," he continued. "The management has been successful; the directors are capable men, and the investments pay a fair dividend. Now sup-

pose someone, the least responsible person in the corporation, were to come forward with a new, untried system of banking and should insist upon its adoption and even threaten the existence of the bank if his plan should be rejected. That would be a case like this of your Socialist and Anarchist."

He was a little heated, but he caught himself with a laugh and was smiling genially as he added:

"I see your 'unemployed' friends often. Scarcely a day passes that men don't come in here asking for a job. My experience is that if they were half as much in earnest in looking for work as I am in looking for men that can work, they wouldn't search far or long. I've tried a good many of them in my time. I can tell now in five minutes whether a man has any real work in him; and those that are worth their keep when you haven't your eye on them, are as scarce as hens' teeth. There are good jobs looking for all the men that are good enough for them; if you want to prove it, start right in here, or go into the State and ask the farmers for a chance to work."

I did not say that this last was the very

thing I meant to do. Instead, I began to tell him of the cases that I knew of men, who, through no fault of their own, were out of work and were not free to go where it could be easily found. Mr. Ross was sympathetic with what was real and personal in the sufferings of unfortunate workers; and gathering encouragement, I went on to speak of suffering no less real which was the result of sheer incapacity, a native weakness of will or lack of courage or perseverance. This made him smile again, and, with a twinkle in his eye, he asked me whether I did not think it was expecting a good deal of organized society to provide for the unfit. Then drawing out his watch, he glanced at it and, turning to me with a fine disregard of the outer man, he asked me to go home with him to supper. I should have been delighted. Perhaps I ought to have gone. I had not forgotten, however, a too hospitable minister in Connecticut; but at the next moment I accepted gladly Mr. Ross's invitation to drive with him in the evening.

Behind a sorrel filly that fairly danced with delight of motion, we set out an hour

or more before sunset, and Mr. Ross drove first through business streets, pointing out to me the principal buildings as we passed, then up to the higher levels of the hillside, on which the city stands, through an attractive residence quarter. From there we could look down upon the river flowing between banks of wooded hills, with its swollen, muddy waters made radiant by the sunset. Then back to the lower city we went and out over the bridge to the military post of Rock Island, past the arsenal and the barracks to the officers' quarters among splendid trees and broad reaches of shaded lawn, and finally to an old farm-house, which had been the home of Colonel Davenport at the time of his struggles with the Indians. It was not a distant date in actual years, but the contrast with the present sway of modern civilization seemed to link it with a far antiquity.

The streets were ablaze with electrics as we drove through the cities of Rock Island and Moline, where the pavements were thronged by slowly moving crowds.

When I left Minneapolis, a little more than

a week later, I had in mind Mr. Ross's challenge that any search for work in the interior of the State would discover abundant opportunities. I was bound next, therefore, for the Iowa border. It would not have taken long to reach it at the usual rate of thirty miles a day. But I did not go through directly. For several days I worked for a fine old Irish farmer near Belle Plain, whose family was stanch Roman Catholic, and whose wife was a veritable sister of mercy to the whole country side, indefatigable in ministry to the sick and poor. A few days later I stopped again and spent a memorable week as hired man on Mr. Barton's farm near Blue Earth City.

It was well along in July, therefore, when I crossed into Iowa from the north, walking down by way of Elmore and Ledyard and Bancroft to Algona, where I spent a few days and then set out for Council Bluffs.

The walk from Algona to Council Bluffs was a matter of two hundred miles and a little more, perhaps. The heat was intense, but, apart from some discomfort due to that, it was a charming walk, leading on through re-

gions that varied widely but constantly presented new phases of native wealth. I should have enjoyed it more but for the awkwardness of my position. It was embarrassing to meet the farmers, yet I wished to meet all that I could. It was not easy to frame an excuse for not accepting the work that was constantly offered to me. To negotiate with a farmer for the job of helping with the chores in payment for a night's lodging and breakfast was trying to his temper, when he was at his wit's end for hands to help at the harvesting. I felt like one spying out the land and mocking its need.

Through a long, hot afternoon I walked from Algona in the direction of Humboldt, some twenty-six miles to the south. The country roads were deserted, the whole population being in the hay-fields, apparently. The corn, which was late in the planting, owing to the spring floods, was making now a measured growth of five inches in the day.

In the evening twilight I passed through the Roman Catholic community of St. James and walked on a few miles in the cool of the

evening. Not every farm-house that I saw wore an air of prosperity. I came upon one, which, even in the dark of a starlit night, gave evidence of infirm fortune. The garden-gate was off its hinges and was decrepit besides. With some difficulty I repropped it against the tottering posts when I entered. In a much littered cow-yard, I found a middle-aged farmer, who with his hired man had just finished the evening milking. Without a word he stood pouring the last bucket of milk, slowly through a strainer into a milk-can on the other side of the fence, as he listened to an account of myself. What I wanted was a place to sleep and a breakfast in the morning. In return I offered to do whatever amount of work he thought was fair. When the bucket was empty he gave me a deliberate look, then simply asked me to follow him to the house. Throwing himself at full length on the sloping cellar-door, he pointed to a chair on the door-step near by as a seat for me, and began to question me about the crops in the country about Algona. I was fortunate enough to divert him soon to his own concerns, and, for

an hour or more, I listened, while he told me of a long struggle on his farm. For fifteen years, he had worked hard, he said, and had seen the gradual settlement and growth of the region immediately about him; yet, with slightly varying fortunes, he was little better off than when he took up the farm as a pioneer.

There was a mystery in it all that baffled him. Low prices were the ostensible cause of his ill-success; he could scarcely get more for his crops than they cost him; but back of low prices was something else, an incalculable power which took vague form in his mind as a conspiracy of the rich, who seemed to him not to work and yet to have unmeasured wealth, while he and his kind could hardly live at the cost of almost unceasing toil.

By five o'clock in the morning we were at the chores, and were hungry enough when the summons came to breakfast at a little after six. There is, in certain forms of it, a cheerlessness in farm-life the gloom of which would be difficult to heighten. The call to breakfast came from the kitchen, which was a shed-like annex to the small, decaying, wooden farm-house.

The farmer, the hired man, and I washed ourselves at the kitchen-door, then passed from the clear sunlight into a room whose smoke-blackened walls were hung round with kitchen utensils. The air was hot and dense with the fumes and smoke of cooking. A slovenly woman stood over the stove, turning potatoes that were frying in a pan, while, at the same time, she scolded two ragged children, who sat at the table devouring the food with their eyes.

Scarcely a word was spoken during the meal, until, near its close, the farmer's wife quite abruptly—as though resuming an interrupted conversation—broke into further account of a horse-thief, whose latest escapade had been not far away, but those whereabouts remained unknown. The very obvious point of which was that, however her husband had been imposed upon, my efforts to pass as an honest man had not met with unqualified success with her. In such manner the breakfast was saved from dulness, and I was sure that the parting guest was heartily speeded when my stint was done.

There is a high exhilaration in a day's walk,

even in the heat of July. The feeling of abounding life that comes with the opening day after sound sleep and abundant food, when one is free from care, and there are twelve hours of daylight ahead for leagues of delightful country, is like the pulse of a kingly sport. From higher points of rolling land I could see far over the squares marked by the regularly recurring roads that intersect one another at right angles at intervals of a mile. The farm-houses stood hidden each in a small grove, with the wheel of a windmill invariably whirling above the tree-tops, and with here and there a long winding line of willows and stunted oaks marking the course of a stream.

It was but twelve miles to Humboldt, and I stopped there only long enough to ask the way to Fort Dodge. The roads were as deserted as on the day before, and I was some distance past Humboldt before I fell in with a single farmer.

He came rumbling down the road, sitting astride the frame of a farm-wagon from which the box had been removed. The fine dust was puffing like white smoke about his dangling

legs, while the massive harness rattled over the big-jointed frames of the horses.

"You may as well ride," he called, as he overtook me, and I lost no time in getting on behind.

More fruitful as a field of conversation even than the weather were the crops at that season. I had picked up a smattering of the lingo, and we were soon commenting on the abundant yield of hay, and the fair promise of rye and wheat, and the favorable turn that the unbroken heat had given to the prospects of the corn, in the hope that it held, in spite of the late planting, of its ripening before the coming of the frost. But, for all the good outlook, the farmer was far from cheerful. I suspected the cause of his depression and avoided it from fear of embarrassment to myself, while yet I wished to hear his views about the situation. When they came, they were what I anticipated:

A good hay crop? Yes, there could hardly be a better, but of what use was hay that rotted in the fields before you could house it, for want of hands? And this was but the beginning of the difficulty.

The whole harvest lay ahead, and the advancing summer brought no solution of the problem of "help." He was very graphic in his account of the year-around need of men that grows acutest in midsummer, and I did not escape the embarrassment that I feared; for, when he pressed me to go to work for him, I could only urge weakly that I felt obliged to hurry on. He was glad to be rid of me at the parting of our ways, a little farther down the road, where he turned to the unequal struggle on his farm, while I walked on at leisure in the direction of Fort Dodge.

A heave of the great plain raised me presently to a height, from which, far over the roll of the intervening fields, with the warm sunlight on their varying growths, I could see the church spires in the town surrounded almost by wooded hills, with the Des Moines River flowing among them. The air was full of the distant clatter of mowing machines, which carries with it the association of stinging heat and the patient hum of bees and the fragrance of new hay.

As I descended into the next hollow there

came driving toward me a young farmer. He was seated on a mower, his eyes fixed on the wide swath cut by the machine in its course just within a zigzag rail fence that flanked the road. The green timothy fell before the blade in thick, soft, dewy widths that carpeted the meadow. A chance glance into the road discovered me, and he brought the horses to a stand. As he pushed back his hat from his streaming forehead, I could see that he was young, but much worn with care and overwork.

"Will you take a job with me?" he asked, and the wonder of it was the greater, since that whole region has through it a strong Yankee strain, and men of such stock are sore pressed when they come to the point without preliminaries.

Again I had to resort to a feeble excuse of necessity to go farther; but, curious as to the response, I ventured an inquiry about the local demand for men.

"Oh, everyone needs men," the farmer rejoined impatiently, as, tightening the reins and adjusting his hat, he started the horses,

anxious, evidently, to drown further idle talk in the sharp noise of the swift-mowing knives.

In the river valley I was not long in finding a lane which disappeared among a scattered growth of stunted trees in the direction of a rocky bluff that marked the bed of the stream. Every day's march brought some chance of a bath, and, at times, I was fortunate enough to fall in with two or three in thirty miles, and nothing could be more restful or refreshing in a long walk, or a better preventive against the stiffness that is apt to accompany it. Here I could both bathe and swim about, and when I regained the highway, it was almost with the feeling of vigor of the early morning.

The main-travelled road did not lead me, as I expected, into Fort Dodge, but to an intersection of two roads, a little west of the town. Instead of going eastward into the city, I turned to the west, in the direction of Tara, a small village on a branch of the Rock Island Railway. The setting sun was shining full in my face, but no longer with much effect of heat. As I hurried on in the fast cooling air, the way led by an abrupt descent into a ravine,

where flowed a small tributary of the Des Moines among rocks and sheer banks, forming a striking contrast with the rolling prairie. It was but a break in the plain. From the top of the opposite bank, the land stretched away again in undulating surface, with much evidence of richness of soil and the wealth of the farmers.

Not without exception, however; for, at nightfall, I was nearing a small house, through whose coating of white paint the blackened weather-boards appeared with an effect of much dilapidation. When I entered the garden, passing under low shade-trees, I met a sturdy Irishman, bare-headed, and in his shirt-sleeves, whose thin white hair and beard alone suggested advancing years.

There was no difficulty in dealing with him. He was not in need of a hired man, but was perfectly willing that I should have supper and breakfast at his home and a bed in the barn on the terms of a morning stint. Accordingly, I followed light-heartedly into the kitchen, where, in the dim light, I saw his wife and a married daughter, with her son, a lad of six or eight.

Supper was ready; with every mark of kindly hospitality, the farmer's wife, a motherly body with an ill-defined waist, made ready for me at the table, moving lightly about, in spite of age and bulk, in bare feet, that appeared from under the skirt of a dark print dress with an apron covering its ample front. A lamp was lighted, and from the vague walls there looked down upon us the faces of saints in bright-colored prints. A kitchen clock ticked on the mantel-shelf, and a kettle was singing on an iron stove that projected half way into the room. We supped on tea and bread and hard biscuits, while the farmer questioned me about the crops along the day's route, and his wife heaved deep sighs and broke into a muttered "The Lord bless us!" when I owned to having walked some thirty-five miles since morning.

I was charmed with my new acquaintances. There was no embarrassment in being with them, and nothing of restraint or gloom in their home. After supper I pumped the water for the stock, and helped with the milking. When the chores were done, I asked

leave to go to bed. A heavy quilt and pillow were given to me, and, spreading them upon the hay, I slept the sleep of a child.

The cows had been milked in the morning and were about to be driven to pasture, when there arose a difficulty in separating from its mother a calf that was to be weaned. The calf had to be penned in the shed, while the old cow went afield with the others. To imprison it, however, proved no easy undertaking. With the agility of a half-back, it dodged us all over the cow-yard, encouraged by the calls of its mother, from the lane, and it evaded the shed-door with an obstinacy that was responsible for adding materially to the content of the old man's next confession.

For some time his wife stood by, her bare feet in the grass, her arms akimbo, and her gray hair waving in the morning breeze, as, with unfeigned scorn, she watched our baffled manœuvres. She could not endure it long.

"I'll catch the beast," she shouted presently in richest brogue; and, true to her word, by a simple strategy, she surprised the little brute and had it by a hind leg before it suspected her nearness.

But capture was no weak surrender on the part of the calf. For its dear life it kicked, and the picture of the hardy old woman, shaken in every muscle under the desperate lunges of the calf, as, clinging with both hands to its leg, she called to us with lusty expletives, to help her before she was "killed entirely," is one that lingers gleefully in memory. The old man winked at me his infinite appreciation of the scene, and between us we relieved his panting wife and soon housed the calf.

When my work was done, and I had said good-by to the family, whose hospitality I had so much enjoyed, I set out for Gowrie, which was twenty odd miles away. At Tara I found that, to avoid a long *détour*, I must take to the railway as far, at least, as Moorland, the next station on the line. Walking the track was sometimes a necessity, but always an unwelcome one. It is weary work to plod on and on, over an unwavering route, where an occasional passing train mocks one's slow advance, and where, for miles the only touch of human nature is in a shanty of a section boss, with ragged children playing about it, and a hag-

gard woman plying her endless task, while a mongrel or two barks after one, far down the line.

At Moorland I resumed the highway, and held to it with uneventful march, until, within a mile or two of Gowrie, two men in a market-wagon overtook me and offered me a lift into the village.

To me the notable event of the day was a drive of several miles with a farmer, in the afternoon. He had been to the freight station in Gowrie, to get there a reaper, which had been ordered out from Chicago. The machine, in all the splendor of fresh paint, lay in the body of the wagon, while he sat alone on the high seat in front.

When, at his invitation, I climbed up beside him, I was delighted with the first impression of the man. In the prime of life and of very compact figure, his small dark eyes, that were the brighter for contrast with a swarthy complexion, moved with an alertness that denoted energy and force. Individuality was stamped upon him and showed itself in the trick of the eye, and in every tone of his voice.

He asked me where I was going, and said that he could take me five miles over the road toward Jefferson, "unless," he added, "you'll stop at my farm and work for me."

I thanked him, but said that I would keep to the road for the present, and then I changed the subject to the reaper. It was of the make of the factory in which, for eight weeks, during the previous winter, I worked as a hand-truckman, and very full of association it was as I looked upon it in changed surroundings. Hundreds of such tongues John Barry and I had loaded on our truck in the paint-shop, then stacked them under the eaves over the platform; scores of such binders we had transferred from the dark warehouses to the waiting freight-cars below. Equally familiar looked the "wider," and the receptacle for twine, and the "binder," and the "bar." I told the farmer that I had been a hand in the factory where his machine was made, and he appeared interested in the account of the vast industry where two thousand men work together in so perfect a system of the division of labor, that a complete reaper, like his own, is

turned out in periods of a few minutes in every working day.

He, too, was autobiographical in his turn. His history was one of the innumerable examples at the West of substantial success under the comparatively simple advantages of good health and an unbounded capacity for work.

From an early home in Pennsylvania, he drifted, as a mere boy, into Indiana, and "living out" there to a farmer, he remained with him for five years. Shrewd enough to see his opportunity, and to seize it, he made himself master of farming, and became so indispensable to his employer that he was soon making more than twenty dollars a month and his keep the year around. At the end of five years he had saved a little more than eight hundred dollars, which he invested in a mortgage on good land. Then came his *Wanderjahre.* He went to Colorado, worked for two years on a sheep ranch, and looked for chances of fortune. They were not wholly wanting, but the prospects were distant, and, rather than endure longer the lonely life of the

frontier, he returned as far as Iowa, and bought his present farm at the rate of ten dollars an acre. For twelve years he had lived and worked upon it. Under improvement, and the growth of population about it, its value had risen threefold, for he had recently added to it a neighboring farm, for which he had to pay at the rate of thirty dollars an acre.

The narrative was piquant in the extreme. There was in it so ingenuous a belief in the order of things under which he had risen unaided from the position of a hired man to that of a hirer of men. Like Mr. Ross, he had no quarrel with social conditions, except that they no longer furnished him with such hands as he himself had been. Under the demoralization of a demand for men far in excess of the supply, the agricultural laborers of the present sit lightly on their places, and are mere time servers, he said, with no personal interest in their employers' affairs. He seemed to imply a causal relation between the condition of the labor market as it affects the farmer and the degeneracy in agricultural laborers. But

whether he meant that or not, he was certainly clear in an insistence that, from his point of view, the social difficulty is one of individual inefficiency, and hardly ever takes the form of any real hindrance to a genuine purpose to get on in the world. All along our route he enforced the point by actual illustration, showing how one farmer, by closest attention to business, had freed himself of the obligations at first incurred in taking up the land, and had added farm to farm, while such another, less efficient than his neighbor, had gone down under a burden of debt.

I opened the gate, and stood watching him as he drove up the long lane leading to his house and barns, while the horses quickened their pace in conscious nearness to their stalls. A Philistine of the Philistines in the impregnable castle of his hard-earned home, I could but like and honor him.

Under the stars, on top of a load of hay that had been left standing in a barn-yard in the outskirts of Jefferson, I slept that night, and spent most of the next day, which was Sunday, under the trees of the town square, in

front of the court-house, going in the morning to a Methodist church, where awaited me the courteous welcome which I found at all church doors, whether in the country or the town. For food I had a large loaf of bread, which I had purchased for ten cents at Gowrie. A little beyond Jefferson, after a delightful bath in the Raccoon River, with the uncommon luxury of a sandy bottom, I got leave of a farmer on the road to Scranton to sleep in his barn, and, after the rest of Sunday, I set out on Monday morning keen and fit for the remaining walk to Council Bluffs.

Monday's march took me from a point not far west of Jefferson, by way of Coon Rapids, to the heart of the hills in the neighborhood of Templeton, where I spent the night on the farm of a Scotsman of the name of Hardy. The heat of the day was prodigious. Not like the languid heat of the tropics, it was as though the earth burned with fever which communicated itself in a nervous quiver to the hot, dry air, and quickened one's steps along the baking roads. The stillness was almost appalling, and, as I passed great fields of

standing corn, I could fancy that I heard it grow with a crackle as of visible outbudding of the blades.

I did not walk all the way. Twice in the day I had a lift, both of several miles, and each with a farmer whose views differed as widely from the other's as though they were separated by a thousand miles, instead of being relatively next-door neighbors.

The first lift came in the morning along a main-travelled road which I took in the hope of meeting an intersecting one that would lead me on to Manning. A good-looking young farmer, fair-haired and blue-eyed, asked me to the seat at his side high above the box of a farm wagon. We were not long in learning that both were interested in the economics of farming, where he knew much and I little, and where I was glad to be a listener. It was like talking again with a socialist from a sweat-shop in Chicago. The fire of a new religion was in him. The difference lay chiefly in that his was not the gospel of society made new and good by doing away with private property and substituting a collective holding of all the land

and capital that are made use of for production; his gospel was that of "free silver," but he held it with a like unshaken faith in its regenerating power. For months he had been preaching it, and organizing night classes among the farmers in all the district schoolhouses within reach, for the purpose of study of the money question. Just once in the talk with me he grew convincing. There was much of the usual insistence of "a conspiracy among rich men against the producing classes," whatever that may mean, and there were significant statements to the effect that nine-tenths of the farmers of the region, which he proudly called "The Garden of Eden of the West," were under mortgage to money-lenders, and that farmers in general, owing to the tyranny of "the money power," were fast sinking to a condition of "vassalage;" but at last he rose to something more intelligible. It was the sting of a taunt that roused him. He had seen copied from an Eastern newspaper the statement that Western farmers were beginning to want free silver, because they grasped at a chance to pay their debts at

fifty cents on the dollar. The man was fine in his resentment of the charge of dishonor.

"We mean to pay our honest debts in full," he said; "but see how the thing works out: I borrowed a thousand dollars when wheat was selling at a dollar a bushel. If I raised a thousand bushels, I could pay my debt by selling them. But when wheat has fallen to fifty cents a bushel, I must raise two thousand to meet the obligation. That came of appreciation in the value of money. It is to the interest of Wall Street men to have it so, while we need an increased volume of money. They deal in dollars and we in wheat, and the more they can make us raise for a dollar, the better off they are. It costs me as much time and labor and wages to raise a thousand bushels of wheat as when it sold for a dollar, and the justice of the case would be in my paying my debt with a thousand bushels, for I don't raise dollars, I raise wheat."

No abstract reasoning or historical examples could have convinced him that an appreciation in the value of money was due to causes other

than a conspiracy among what he called "the money kings," who, in some manner, had got control of the volume of currency and so determined the prices of commodities. But with all his hallucinations in finance, it was very plain that the charge of dishonesty had been misapplied.

It was toward the end of the day's march that I came by the second lift. For miles the country had grown more hilly, and when I left behind me the village of Coon Rapids I found myself climbing a hill that was really steep, then making a sharp descent into a valley, only to begin another hill longer and steeper than any before.

I was slowly ascending one of the longest hills when a farmer in a light market wagon called to me, making offer of a drive. I waited at the crest of the hill and climbed to the seat at his side, while the horses stood panting lightly in the cooler air that moved across the hill-tops.

In the two or three miles that we drove together, the farmer conversed very freely. Quite as well informed as my acquaintance of

the morning, he was of sturdier calibre than he, and the difference in their views was complete. He knew of no conspiracy against farmers or any "producing class," and he held that almost the most disastrous thing that could be done would be to disturb the stability of the currency. An appreciation in the value of money there had been, but it was plainly due to causes at work the world over, and quite beyond any man's control. Farmers were suffering from it now; but a few years ago they had profited by appreciation in the value of crops, and might look hopefully for a return of better times for them. As to the farmers of that part of Iowa, their fortune had been of the best. These hills were looked upon at first as the least desirable land and were last to be taken up, but had proved, when once developed, almost the richest soil in the State. The farmers who settled there had found themselves, in consequence, in possession of land that was constantly increasing in value. From $10 an acre it had quickly risen to $20, and many of the owners would now reluctantly yield their farms for $40 an acre.

There was nothing boastful in the statements. My informant was a person of quiet speech and manner, but he had the advantage of being able to enforce from concrete examples all that he had to say, and the histories of most of the farmers, and every transaction in real estate for miles around seemed to be at his command.

Nothing could have fitted better the mood in which I left him than my meeting that evening with Mr. Hardy, at whose farm I spent the night. A genial Scotsman of clear, open countenance, whose deep, rich voice seemed always on the verge of laughter; he welcomed me right heartily, and gave me supper of the best and a bed in the granary on fragrant hay, which he spread there with his own hands, and a breakfast in the morning; and for all this he would accept return, neither in work nor pay.

We talked long together of English politics, but he was at his best on the condition of the Iowa farmer. A more contented man I have rarely met, nor a man of more contagious good-humor. As a youth he came from Scot-

land, and had been a pioneer among these Iowa hills. For him the hardships were all gone from farming, as compared with his early experience. An accessible market, admirable labor-saving machines, ready intercourse with neighbors and with the outside world, had changed the original struggle under every disadvantage to a life of ease in contrast. Very glad I should be of the chance to accept his parting invitation to return at some time to his home.

Early in Tuesday's march a young Swedish farmer picked me up, and carried me on to within five miles of Manning; and, a little west of the town, I fell in with another farmer, who shared his seat with me over six miles of the way. A third lift of a couple of miles into Irwin helped me much on the road to Kirkman. I had not reached the village, however, when night fell. At a farm, a mile or more to the east of it, I found as warm a welcome as on the night before. Supper was ready, and room was made for me; then I lent a hand at the milking with the hired men. Last, before going to bed, we had a swim. The

farmer kept for the purpose a pool in the barn-yard which was well supplied with constantly changing water, and nothing could have been more grateful after a day of work and walking in a temperature of 105° in the shade. I should liked to have remained there as a hired man almost as much as with Mr. Hardy, but the journey to Council Bluffs was now well under way, and I was bent upon completing it before another long stop.

On Wednesday I wished to reduce as much as possible the distance to Neola, which is a village at the junction of the St. Paul and Rock Island railways; but I had to spend the night a few miles southwest of Shelby. This was because I was not so fortunate as on the day before in the matter of lifts. I got but one drive that day. Turning from Kirkman into the stage-road leading into Harlan, the county-seat of Audubon County, I saw approaching me a buggy containing two men. I stepped aside to let it pass, but it stopped beside me, and one of the men invited me to get in. The country doctor was writ large upon him, and, at his side, was a coatless, collarless,

taciturn youth, who clearly was his "hired man." Crowded between them I sat down, and the physician turned his sharp, genial eyes upon me.

"Where are you from?"

"Where are you going?"

"How old are you?"

"What's your name?"

"Where do you expect to go when you die?"

"Why don't you shave?"

Such were the questions that, with almost fierce rapidity, he plied me with, waiting meanwhile for but the briefest answer to each. And when the ordeal was over, he laughed a low, shrewd laugh while his eyes twinkled merrily, as he remarked, dryly: "I guess you'll do."

He allowed me no time to acknowledge the compliment, but went swiftly on:

"Do you know that Mr. Frick has been shot and may die?"

I did not know it, for I had not seen a newspaper since leaving Algona, and my intercourse had been with farmers whose news reaches them by the weekly press.

It was an exceedingly tragic climax to the situation at Homestead, and not without influence in determining the sympathies of the Western farmers with the issues involved there. It had been amazing to me to discover how keen was the interest taken in the strike all along my route, and it was not a little significant, I thought, to find everywhere a strong indignation against the use of a private police force in accomplishing ends legal in themselves and fully provided for by law and usage. So far in the struggle the feeling of the farmers was with the men. Beyond that they appeared uncertain. There was a question of fact to begin with. Did the cut affect more the hands who were working for a dollar and a half a day or the skilled workmen who were reported to get, some of them as much as fifteen dollars? Until this was clear, there could be but speculation.

Most interesting of all, I had found their attitude toward the question that was widely raised of a right the workmen were said to have in the property at Homestead, apart from their wages, on the ground of their having created

its value. Here was the real issue of modern industrialism, and on it I found the farmers conservative, to say the least.

The American farmer is a landed proprietor with a gift for logical tendencies that does him credit. His chiefest aim is to maintain, if possible, his economic independence, and a doctrine that would give to his hired man an ultimate claim to ownership in his farm is not one that is likely soon to meet with wide acceptance among his class.

It was with the physician that I talked these matters over, and I was interested to find my experience confirmed by that of so expert an observer, whose chances were so good.

Very reluctantly I parted from him at his door and made in the direction of Neola. Owing to rains that delayed me on Thursday, I did not enter Neola until the middle of the afternoon of that day, and there I did not stop in passing, but pressed on to Underwood, where I spent the night.

Friday was clear again and hot, but the roads were difficult, and I had to desert them for the lines of the St. Paul and Rock Island

railways, that parallel each other side by side for several miles into Council Bluffs.

For the past day I had not had a single offer of a job. The farmers, as I approached the town, seemed either less in need of men or less willing to take up with a chance wayfarer. No doubt I should have had no difficulty had I set about a search for work. Certainly I could not have fared better than I did for dinner at a farm, where I was allowed to lend a hand with a load of hay. And after dinner, when the farmer and I talked together for an hour, I found in him the same contentment which struck me as so general among Iowa farmers.

But my letters were in the Post-office at Omaha, and I felt impatient of delay until I should get them. I did not get them on that day, however, nor for several days to come. In Council Bluffs I met the unlooked-for barrier of a toll-bridge across the Missouri. Five cents would give me a right of way, but I had only one, and must, therefore, look for work. I counted myself very fortunate when, at nightfall, I got a job in a livery-stable.

I had crossed Iowa, and Mr. Ross's promise had been abundantly fulfilled. On any day of the march I could have found a dozen places for the asking, and scarcely a day had passed that I had not repeatedly been asked to go to work. I should have thought this a condition peculiar to the harvest time, had not many of the farmers told me that, while their need is greatest then, it is so constant always that no good man need ever be long without work among them.

A SECTION-HAND ON THE UNION PACIFIC RAILWAY

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IT cost five cents to go from Council Bluffs to Omaha in the summer of 1892. That was the toll of a foot passenger in crossing the bridge which, spanning the Missouri, joined the two cities. It was a reasonable toll, I dare say, and paid probably no more than a fair return on the capital invested in the bridge, but it was five cents and I had only one. One dingy copper coin, with its Indian head and laurel wreath, was all that was left of the savings from my last job. I must, therefore, find work in Council Bluffs, and the letters which had been waiting for me in Omaha must wait a little longer. But I felt fagged, for I had reached the end of a six days' walk of some 200 miles, so I took a seat on a bench in the shade in the public square near a foun-

tain, whose play was soothing in the heat of a midsummer afternoon.

I thought regretfully then of the farmer with whom I dined at noon that day, and with whom I might have remained as a hired man. Besides, I remembered with some concern two men on foot who met me on the outskirts of Council Bluffs.

"Where are you from, partner?" one of them asked, with some bluster in his manner.

"I've just come down through the State from Algona," I replied.

"Is there any work out the way you came?"

"Lots of it," I assured him.

"Well, there ain't none the way you're goin'. Me and me pal is wore out lookin' for a job in Omaha and Council Bluffs."

I had come 1,500 miles as a wage-earner, and I had 1,500 yet to go before I should reach the Pacific, but not yet had it been hard to find work of some sort, except when I chose to stay in a crowded city in winter. The anxiety that I felt in this instance proved groundless, for when, in the cool of the even-

ing, I looked for employment I found it at the third application, and I went to bed that night a hostler in a livery-stable at a wage of twenty dollars a month and board at a " Fifth Avenue " hotel.

Ten dollars less twelve cents, which were due for the hire of books at a stationer's shop, were clear gain at the end of two weeks' service in the stable. But the necessity of writing up notes and of answering many letters, besides the allurements of a public library, kept me for several days in Omaha, so that my cash had dwindled, when, one afternoon about the middle of August, I left the city, with the broad State of Nebraska as the next step of the journey.

It was natural to follow the Union Pacific Railway. It takes its course westward through the State, and is paralleled by a main-travelled road that connects the frequent settlements along the line. Just out of Omaha the railroad makes a southern bend, and I avoided this by following the directer course of the highway that led next morning to a meeting with the rails at Elkhorn. The go-

ing there was of the plainest. The railway followed the northern bank of the Platte River and the road followed the rail. If the day was wet, I left the road and walked the sleepers; if the day was dry, I walked the road, but always I was within easy hail of a lift, and so fell in with many an interesting farmer and was saved many miles of walking.

It was late in the afternoon of a rainy day that there chanced a lift of the most timely. From low, heavy clouds had been falling since early morning a misty rain that almost floated in the warm, still air. For a hundred yards together I might find a tolerable path along the turf at the edge of the road. Then, as the mud grew deeper, I took to the rails and kept them, until the monotony of the sleepers drove me to the mire again. I had seen scarcely a soul that day except the fleeting figures on the trains and an occasional bedraggled section-hand who looked sullenly at me, barely deigning a salutation as I passed. It seemed hardly worth while to be abroad, but I had found it generally best to stick to the road when I could, and I was beginning now to think of a

shelter for the night and trying to find some satisfaction in having covered more than twenty miles since morning.

The rumble of a heavy wagon began to sound down the road; and when I could hear the splash of the horses' hoofs near by, I was delighted to catch the call of the driver, as he asked me to a seat at his side. He was a farm-hand, young and muscular and slouching, as he sat stoop-shouldered, with the lines held loosely in his bare hands, while the rain dripped from a felt hat upon the shining surface of his rubber coat.

Why he had asked me to ride I could not clearly see, for he scarcely turned his lack-lustre eyes upon me when I climbed up beside him, and he seemed not in the least anxious to talk.

We were driving through a region that was growing familiar from its changelessness. On every side were fields of corn, unfenced, and bounded only by the horizon, apparently, as they stretched away into cloudy space. Like islands in a sea of standing corn were widely scattered groups of farm buildings,

their clusters of cottonwood-trees about them and sometimes a fruit orchard. And if there was any other break in the monotony of corn, it was where vast acres had been turned to raising beets for the sugar trade. Hardly a swell marred the level of the prairie, and the rails reached endlessly on in an unbending line across the plain.

The usual subjects of conversation were of no avail with my new acquaintance. He was not interested in corn and only languidly in the experiment with beets, and the general election failed to move him, although he ventured so far as to insist that there was no hope for the farmers of the West until the free coinage of silver should be secured. His mood was in keeping with the day, and life was "flat, unprofitable, and stale."

He quickened finally, to the theme of work, but only as a vent to his depression. Work was plentiful enough; for such as he, life was little else than work, but of what profit was it to slave your soul out for enough to eat and to wear and a place to sleep?

There was no escaping the tragedy of the

man's history as he told me simply of his father's death from overwork in an attempt to pay off the mortgage on the farm and how his mother was left to the unequal struggle. He himself was eleven then, and the elder of two children; he could remember clearly how the home was lost—the accumulated labor of many years. From that time his life had been an unbroken struggle for existence, against odds of sickness that again and again had swept away his earnings and thrown him back to the dependence of an agricultural laborer.

Once his savings had gone in quite another fashion. It was at the very point when there seemed to have come a change for the better in his fortunes. He was $200 to the good at the end of the last autumn, and with this as an opening wedge he meant to force a way eventually to independent business of his own. So he went to Omaha, and, in one of the employment bureaus there, he met a man, past middle life, who offered him work on a stock farm twenty miles below the city. Thirty dollars a month were to be his wages from the

first, if he proved himself worth so much, and there was to be an increase when he earned it. In the meanwhile, he would be learning the trade of rearing horses for the market, and, if he chose to invest his savings in the business, when he knew it better, there could be no surer way, his informer said, to a paying enterprise of his own.

He was committing himself to nothing, he found, so he decided to give the place a trial. His new employer and he left the office together, and, having an hour before train time, they went to a restaurant for dinner, and the stock farmer told his man much in detail of the farm. He was an elderly person of quiet manner, very plain of speech, and friendly withal, and very thoughtful; for when they were about to leave the restaurant, he opened a small leather bag that he carried guardedly and, disclosing a bank book and a considerable sum of money, which he had drawn to pay the monthly wages of the hands, he suggested to our friend to deposit with them his own valuables in safety from the risk of pickpockets about the station and in the cars, adding, mean-

while, that he would then entrust the bag to him, as there were one or two places where he wished to call on the way to the train.

The farm-hand held the bag firmly as his employer and he walked down the street together, and very firmly as he waited in a shop, where his boss left him with the plea that he had an errand in an office overheard, but would return in a few minutes. The minutes grew to an hour, and the youth would have been anxious had it not been that the bag with his savings was safe in his keeping. But when the second hour was nearly gone, his feeling was one of anxiety for the boss, until a question to the shop-keeper led to the opening of the bag and the discovery that it contained some old newspapers and nothing more.

He went back to the farm then and worked all winter and through the summer that was now nearing its end, but illness in his family had consumed his earnings, and, at the end of fourteen years of labor, he was very much where he started as a lad, apart from added strength and experience.

That evening, in a village inn, while the

rain poured without, I sat cheek by jowl with a Knight Templar who had just returned from a convention of his order in Denver. It was not the meeting that now inspired him; it was the mountains. Reared on the prairie, he had never seen even hills before, and the sight of the earth rising from a plain until it touched high heaven was like giving to his mind the sense of a new dimension. For hours, he said, he would let his eyes wander from Long's Peak to Pike's and back again, while his imagination lost itself among the gorges and dark cañons, and in the midsummer glitter of aged snow. There lay the charm of it, in the plain telling of the opening to him of a world of majesty and beauty such as he had never dreamed of, revealing powers of reverence and admiration that he had not known were his.

The humor of it, touched with charm, was all in his description of concrete experience of the new world of mystery. His account of an ascent of Pike's Peak would have made the reputation of a humorist. An expedition to the Pole could hardly take itself more seriously. A few of his fellow-knights and he,

with the ladies who were of their company, set out at midnight from Manitou to make sure of reaching the summit (a four hours' walk) before dark of the following day. Not "the steep ascent of heaven" is beset with greater difficulty and danger for a struggling saint than was the climb along the line of a "cog" railway for this band of knights-errant and ladies fair. One can readily conceïve the peril of the adventure—for feet accustomed only to the prairie—in treading from midnight until dawn the brinks of yawning chasms, with water falling in the dark.

Nor did day dispel the terrors. The precipices were still there and a growing awfulness in the height above the plain that caused a "giddiness" which was the harder to resist because of the increasing difficulty of breathing the rarefied air. Some of the women fainted on the way, and the last hour's climb was an agony to all the company; for now the effort of a few steps exhausted them, and they despaired of ever reaching the goal.

It was past noon when finally they sank down at the summit in the shelter of rocks that

shielded them from the piercing wind and ate what was left of their store of provision.

The unconscious exaggeration took now a form even more comical in an account of what was visible from the mountain. I have heard, in a national convention, a young negro from Texas second the nomination of a party leader with a fervor and in terms that might befit an archangel. The play of fancy about Pike's Peak was comparable with it, not in eloquence, perhaps, but certainly in a pitch which made both speeches memorable as gems of unstudied humor

From Thursday afternoon, when I left Omaha, until Saturday evening, I walked as far as Columbus, then rested over Sunday. On Monday morning the course was still the line of the Union Pacific, which had now turned southwestward in following the bank of the river.

Tuesday's march was the longest that I had made so far. From a point near Clarksville I went to one a little beyond Grand Island, which was, I judged, about forty miles in all; but as various lifts had carried me quite a fifth

of the way, the actual walking was not much above the normal amount.

On Wednesday morning, August 24th, my funds were low. I saw the way to a dinner in the middle of the day, but to no supper or bed at night. Settling down to work would now be a welcome change, however, after hard walking, just as I always found the life of the road a grateful relief, at first, from the strain of heavy labor.

After dinner I began to think of something to do. It would be easy to apply for work upon some of the many farms that I was passing, and not difficult to find it, I fancied, from the reports of the farmers with whom I had talked on the road from Omaha. Still, I had had a little experience as a farm-hand and I wished to extend the range of the experiment as far as I could within the limits of unskilled labor, so I thought again.

I was a little beyond the town of Gibbon. It was a hot August afternoon, and glancing down the line I saw a gang of section-hands at work, the air rising in quivering heat-waves about them, and the glint of the sunshine on

the rails. When I reached them I could easily pick out the boss, a white-haired, smooth-shaven, ruddy Irishman with a clear blue eye, and, as it proved, a tongue as genial as it was coarse. Two of his sons were of the gang, well-grown lads, scarcely out of their teens, dark, good-looking, and reserved. He told me that they were his sons, and he gave me much information besides; for my applying for a job had been a signal to the whole gang to quit work and soberly chew the cud of the situation, while the old man gossiped. The fourth hand was a slovenly youth, who stood contentedly leaning on his shovel and listening idly to what was said.

No, the boss could not give me work; he already had the full number of men, but he knew that the gang of the next section to the west was short a man when he saw them last, and he thought that my chance of employment with them was good.

I walked something more than three miles into the next section, which was the Thirty-second, before I came up with the gang that worked it. They were three men when I

found them and they were bracing the sleepers near a little station which is known as Buda. I went up to them and asked for Osborn, the boss, and was answered by a tall, frank-eyed young Westerner of unmistakable native birth.

Osborn owned at once to being short-handed and said that I might go to work next morning, if I wished, and then went on, in business-like fashion, to explain that the wages were twelve and a half cents an hour for ten hours' work and that his wife would board me for three dollars and a half a week.

"Very well," I said, "I'll take the job."

"You can go right over to the house," he went on, "or wait here and go home with us at six o'clock."

I much preferred to wait and leave explanations to the boss, for my attempts at explaining myself to the women folk of my employers had not always ended in leaving me perfectly at ease.

The present situation could be taken in at a glance. Four miles farther on the road was the town of Kearney, built out, for the most

part, to the north of the line. The station at Buda was the conventional frame building, with a pen for cattle at one end and a fenced platform for transferring the stock to the cattle-cars. A siding ran for a hundred yards or more beside the main line, and a few steps beyond it and across the main travelled road was the section-boss's shanty, a lightly built wooden shell, unpainted and weather-stained. Near an end of the siding, with a few feet of rails spanning the distance between, stood a little structure not unlike an overgrown kennel, where the hand-car for the men and the section tools were housed. For a space about the station and the boss's shanty and on either side the railway and the road it was clear, then began the inevitable corn that stood full-grown on the prairie as far as the eye could see.

The shadow of the station lay across the high prairie grass under its eastern wall, and there I lay down to rest.

If I had failed of work at Buda, I should have thought little of it and should have walked on as a matter of course to further search in Kearney or in the country about the

town. But having found a job and knowing that I had only to rest until going to work in the morning, there came a feeling of languor which it was a luxury to indulge. As I lay there in the high prairie grass at the end of another stretch of nearly 200 miles of walking, and looked dreamily up at the sky and thought contentedly of my new post, every muscle relaxed, and the will to summon them to action seemed gone, until the mere thought of further effort for that day was an agony which one harbored for the edge it gave to the sense of ease.

It was difficult to respond even to a call to supper. But I got to my feet at six o'clock and joined the gang, and together, after storing the tools, we walked over to the boss's shanty. On a bench outside the kitchen-door were tin basins and soap and water, with the usual roller towel, and soon we were waiting for a summons to the evening meal.

Already I was much attracted by Osborn and the section-hands. Tyler was a young American, a long-limbed youth with clear smooth muscles and an intelligent, expressive

face that suggested breeding, while Sullivan was a full-faced, stocky Irishman, of five-and-twenty, ready and frank, and full of energy.

The shop that they talked as we waited outside was still the topic at the table when we were called to supper in the little front room of the cabin with its wooden walls papered with old journals. Never had I been adopted more naturally by any company of fellow-workmen. They asked my name and where I was from, and having learned that I had come from the East, they appeared satisfied with the account of myself and made me one of their number with perfect friendliness. Osborn's father, a quiet old farmer, joined us, but we saw the women and children only as we passed through the kitchen. Osborn's mother was there with her daughter-in-law and in one or other of them, perhaps in both, there was a singularly good cook and housekeeper.

One could see instantly the cleanliness of the house for all its shabbiness, and the supper to which we sat down was not only clean, but bountiful and good. We had soup and boiled

chicken, with rich gravy, and potatoes and steaming green corn, besides white bread of the rarest and a sauce for dessert. I looked with a livelier interest at the women as we passed out, and I saw in the elder one a serene, sweet-faced, old farmer's wife, so trim and neat that she might have stepped from a New England country side, while the younger woman, in her abounding vigor, appeared rather a product of the West.

Osborn and Tyler had turned the talk at supper to something that attracted them to Kearney for the evening, and almost immediately when the meal was ended they hitched an Indian pony that was Osborn's to a light, rickety sulky and drove to town. Sullivan and I were left alone, for the old farmer had disappeared. We lit our pipes and sat down in the prairie grass with our eyes to the sunset. The horizon was aglow with crimson and gold that faded to a clear, cold green before changing to the purple in which the evening star was set. The keen gleam of electrics flashed out over the town, and a breeze rustled faintly among the crisping blades of corn.

Sullivan and I sat smoking lazily in the twilight. He had begun to tell me about himself, and my spirits were rising, for it was no furbished tale that I heard.

There is little marvel in leading men to talk of themselves, and workingmen are no exception; but there is a difference, which is all the difference in the world, between a narrative that is evidently inspired by the hope of impressing you, and one that is a spontaneous self-revelation.

Sullivan was such another waif as Farrell, but older, and with not so fair a chance of settling ever into the framework of conventional living. Twice he had crossed the Atlantic as a deck-hand on a cattle-ship, and, therefore, he knew the nether depths of depravity, but he boasted nothing of his knowledge. Once only, there came into his voice a note of exultation. It was at the end of an account of a thirty days' term that he once served in the Bridewell, at Chicago. The description was admirable, for the memory of it was strong upon him, and he unconsciously made you see the prison and the keepers, and the flocking of

the prisoners into the inner court in the morning, each from his separate cell.

"They knowed me there for *Cuckoo* Sullivan," he said, "which was the name the cops in Chicago give me; and I guess they'd know yet who you was after, if you asked at the Harrison Street Station for *Cuckoo* Sullivan."

We moved presently to a little platform near the line and were sitting on the steps smoking contentedly while there came to us the soughing of the night air in the corn. Sullivan was telling me of a long stay in Oklahoma and the Indian Territory, of the wild days of the opening of the reservation, and wilder days, when, with other adventurers, he roamed the new lands and lived at give and take with strange fortune. He told me of his loves, and they were many and some of them were dusky; and of the fights that he had fought, not all of them good; and how, finally, he had drifted north again as far as Scotia, Neb., and had worked there as a section-hand before coming to Buda.

Sullivan and I were friends when we turned in that night to our cots in the attic under the

shanty roof. Next morning Osborn paired us as partners, when the day's work began. On the stroke of seven we four opened the tool-house and loaded the car with the crowbars and wrenches and picks and shovels that would be needed, then placing our dinner pails on top, we ran the car out to the line and lifted it into position.

Twenty years earlier our predecessors, who laid the line and who used the same tool-house, took with them each a rifle every day in readiness for attacks of Indians. The worn sockets and rests were still to be seen, where the rifles had stood at night against an inner wall. Giving the car a start in the direction of Kearney we jumped aboard, and each taking a handle of the crank, we were soon flying over the rails. The sun was obscured, the early morning air was cool, and the rapid movement exhilarating, so that the first impression of the job was a jolly one. But pumping a hand-car is not the whole of a navvy's work. Soon we reached the western end of our section, where there met us on their car the gang of the section next our own. Osborn had some talk

with the other boss about certain details of the work, then lifting the car from the line, we settled to the day's task. Osborn and Tyler worked together and Sullivan and I. Sullivan seemed not to mind having a green hand to break in, for he set about it with energy and not a little skill. There were sunken sleepers that had to be raised and tamped, and new coupling bars put in to replace those that had split, and spikes to be driven where the old ones were loose, and nuts to be tightened that were working free of their bolts.

Five hours on end of this were fatiguing; it was the drill, drill of rough manual labor, but with the difference of some variety, and there could not have been a better partner than Sullivan. He taught me how to tamp about the sleepers and put the new bars in place and tighten the nuts, but the noon signal was welcome as we heard it sounded by the steam whistles in Kearney.

We joined Osborn and Tyler then, and taking our dinner-pails from the hand-car, we all sat down in the prairie grass, settling ourselves to an hour of keen enjoyment. Slices of bread

and cold meat and a bit of sausage and a piece of pie and cheese with cold tea, made up each man's ration and laid the foundation for a smoke. Rough hand labor is always hard, however trained to it one's muscles may have been, and ten hours of it daily are apt to have a deadening effect upon the mind, and time drags heavily to the end. Yet, when the nooning is reached, or the day's work is done, there come with meat and drink a feeling of renewal that others cannot know as workingmen know it, and a solace in tobacco that is the very lap of ease.

As we lay there in the prairie grass, our eyes following, dreamily, the smoke as it curled in the warm sunlight, the talk drifting aimlessly, eddying now and then about a topic that held it for a moment, then flowing free again. Once it came my way.

"When you was living East, did you ever go to New York?" asked the boss.

"Yes, quite often," I said.

"Was you ever in Wall Street?"

"Many times."

"Well, that's where them" (I omit the in-

trevening qualifying terms) "bloated bondholders lives that we poor devils out here has to work for."

It was not worth while to explain that Wall Street is not a residence quarter, but the statement had an interest of its own, and so I probed the boss for what lay under it. There was nothing, apparently, beyond a vague sense of injustice which had bred a feeling of hatred for a class that the Free Silver agitation had taught him to call "money lords." These were a company of men who had got control of the "money market" and lived, consequently, in much splendor, in Wall Street, at the expense of the "producing classes," which appeared to consist solely of those who work with their hands on their own account or for day's wages.

The idea would have been not in the least surprising had it come from a fellow-laborer in a town, where some wave of well-defined revolutionary agitation might have touched him, but coming from a native-born farmer's son, grown to a section-boss, it served to deepen the wonder that one felt in finding so often

among an agrarian population the beginnings of revolutionary doctrine.

Sullivan did not share the boss's views. "Money lords" and "the producing classes" were but idle words to him. Life was a matter of working or loafing. If you labored with your hands, yours was the bondage of work; if not, you had escaped the primal curse. His philosophy was luminous in a single sentence while we were at work in the afternoon.

It was late in the day, but still very hot, for the clouds had melted in the morning and the sun gained in strength as the day passed, and no breeze came to stir the sweltering air. We were employed now near the eastern end of the section, where some regrading was necessary because of weakening in the road-bed. Sullivan and I were together as before. It was pick and shovel labor, and, because of some earlier experience, I did not need much coaching, so that we were working in silence for the most part, except that Sullivan now and then would burst into song. But his snatches of song grew rarer as the afternoon wore away and as the muscles in our backs pro-

tested the more against the continued strain. With leaden feet the minutes plodded slowly past, sixty minutes to the hour and five hours of unbroken toil. Like Joshua's moon at Ajalon, the sun seemed to stand at gaze, and, from the mid-western sky, transfixed us with his heat. Five o'clock came, and the next hour stretched before us in almost intolerable length. For some time Sullivan had been silent, drudging doggedly on. Now, I saw him draw himself slowly erect, rubbing with one hand, meanwhile, the small of his back, while his face expressed comically the pain he felt, and then he said, and I wish that I could suggest the rich Irish brogue with which he said it:

"Ach, I'm that sorry that I didn't study for the ministry."

Two days later the gang from the next section to the east joined us in the afternoon, and together we put in a new "frog" in the switch near the Buda station. They were the Irish boss with his two sons and the taciturn hand of the farm-laborer type. The boss remembered me instantly and commented favorably on my

having taken his advice in applying to Osborn for a job.

The point of our joining forces was in the necessity of laying the frog without interfering with traffic. Osborn had chosen the hour in the day when there was the longest interval between trains, and we had everything in readiness when, at the appointed time, the other gang met us, so that with our united labor the frog was in place and secure when the next train passed.

Much of the talk between the bosses at this time referred to a later meeting, when, on an appointed day, the gangs for many miles along the line were to foregather at Grand Island under the Division-Superintendent's orders. There was to be a general distribution then of new sleepers along the railway.

What interested me most at the moment was the tone of the men in speaking of their superior in the service. I had caught it frequently in earlier references to the Superintendent among ourselves. He was the official in command of all the section-gangs in the division and directly responsible for the condition of the road.

The men told me that he had been a section-hand himself and then a boss, and that he had worked his way to the position of superintendent in a long service with the company. The feeling that they bore him was one of admiration, not unmixed with fear. They respected his knowledge of every detail of their work, and a certain liking for him grew out of the fact of his having been a laborer like themselves, but they feared him with an awesome fear.

I remember his passing one afternoon while we were at work. We had stood aside at the coming of a freight train, and, as we stepped back to our work, we caught sight of a wiry little man standing on the rear platform of the caboose, his hands clasping the railing and his eyes intent on the road-bed. Osborn thought that he saw the flutter of a piece of paper in the dust raised by the passing train, and suspecting that it was an order for himself, he dropped his tools and searched the embankment, and even the neighboring cornfield to the leeward, with an eagerness that might have marked a hunt for hid treasure. He could

find nothing, however, and for the rest of the day, and I know not for how much longer, the incident was upon his mind with a sense of keen anxiety.

When the day appointed for distributing the sleepers came, we boarded at Buda an east-bound passenger train, and were pressed into a smoking-car already overcrowded by bosses and section-hands. Osborn vouched for us to the conductor, as the other bosses did for their men when we picked up a gang at almost every station.

It was a welcome escape to get off at Grand Island. Like boys set free from school we clambered over the long freight-train, laden with sleepers, that stood waiting for us on a siding. Our orders were perfectly clear. We were to distribute ourselves through the train and, at a given signal, to unlade the sleepers as fast as we could, throwing them along the road-bed well free of the line. Each man was to remember, moreover, that, at the end of his own section, he was to leave the train.

I found myself in a box-car with three other

navvies, all strangers to me. Sleepers lay piled to the roof from end to end of the floor, with only a passage across the middle wide enough for us to begin the work. A blue-eyed young Swede and I had just agreed to be partners when the Superintendent passed in his way along the train, noting the number of men in each car.

In a few moments we were off, and we had not gone far before the prearranged signal came. Then we bent to the work with a will. It was a break in the regular routine and we took it as a lark. Two men attacked one side of the passage and the Swede and I the other. Soon it was a race between us to see which could unload the faster.

The train moved slowly, discharging sleepers that piled themselves in grotesque confusion along the sides of the embankment, while above the noise of the cars, rose the voices of the men as they shouted excitedly in the unwonted rivalry.

Before I realized that we had gone half so far, I caught sight of the Buda station. Our car was nearly empty, and as nearly empty at

our end as at the other, the Swede and I thought, but our fellow-navvies claimed a victory when, at the end of the section, I jumped to the ground with much care to avoid the flying sleepers. Osborn was there, and soon the other members of the gang gathered, and then we returned to the usual work until six o'clock.

For two weeks or more I remained at work on this section, then I knew that I must be going; for the autumn was at hand, and I aimed to cross the Rockies and reach the milder climate of the Southwest by the beginning of winter. But the actual parting with the gang presented the usual embarrassments. I had become used to the men, and they to me, and we worked together harmoniously and were on terms of easiest friendliness. Besides, no one had appeared who would take my place, and there were many sleepers to be laid.

I always stipulated with my employers at the beginning of an engagement that I wished to be free to go when I pleased, as they were free to discharge me when they wished, but this rarely smoothed the way of going, for they

lost sight of the agreement as they grew accustomed to me as a hand.

When I told Osborn one evening that I must be gone in a day or two, his eyes took on a look of perplexity that did not relieve my embarrassment, and he began to plead the pressure of the work and the difficulty of getting section-hands until I felt like a deserter. But there was no help for it, and early one September morning, after reluctant good-byes to the family and the men, I set off down the line with my wages in one pocket and in another a luncheon that the boss's mother put up for me.

When the sun was setting that evening, I had entered a region where the cornfields were fewer, where the cattle country had begun, and the alkali shone white in the soil, and the bones of dead cattle lay bleaching on the plain.

"A BURRO-PUNCHER"

"A BURRO-PUNCHER"

MIKE PRICE was a prospector by nature; his prospecting through the summer and autumn of 1892 in the Wagon Wheel Gap country of southwestern Colorado was a mere incident in a long career. Phœnix, Ariz., was his head-quarters, and he would fain return there for the Indian summer of its winter climate; for he hated snow and the hard cold of the Rocky Mountain camps, where, as he said, a man must hibernate until spring. But Phœnix was the best part of 600 miles away across a thinly settled frontier. Burros and blankets and food for the journey were to be had only for ready money, and Price had not "struck it rich"; indeed, he had not struck it at all. One after another the parts of his camping outfit had gone into a pawnbroker's shop at Creede, in the progress of a luckless season, until the late autumn

found him without burro or blanket or bacon, and bereft even of the "gun" (a six-shooter) which General ——— had given him in recognition of his services as a scout.

It was late November when I met him, and Price was making a precarious living at odd jobs for civil engineers. One of these was my friend Hamilton, who had known Price for years and who proved himself a friend in need to both of us, for he brought us together and proposed the journey which took us to Phœnix, and which gave me six weeks' experience as a "burro-puncher."

You could trust Hamilton to find a way out. There is scarcely a phase of frontier life that he did not know from personal experience, and he saw at a glance that Price's position and my own would exactly complement each other in furthering a plan which was common to us both. Price wanted to reach Phœnix, and so did I; he knew the way but was without the means of travel, while I, knowing nothing of the country, yet had some store of savings.

Wages were high at Creede. The miners were getting $3, and I, as an unskilled laborer,

working with a gang that was cutting a road down Bachelor Mountain from the New York Chance Mine to Creede, was paid $2.50 a day. Our board and lodging cost us $7 a week, but they were worth it, and, even at that rate, there remained a considerable margin for possible saving.

Hamilton knew my plans; he was one of the few whom I had told, in the course of my wandering, of the object of the expedition. We had been spending an evening with a company of kindred Bohemians at the house of a mine superintendent, and were returning together to his quarters in the quiet of two o'clock in the morning through a world white with the first snow of winter and dazzling under a full moon.

I had money enough to take me to Phœnix by rail, and it seemed the height of folly to go in any other way, so I began to explain why I wished to walk and why I had already walked most of the way from the Atlantic. Hamilton listened patiently, but without interest, I thought, until abruptly he turned upon me with approval, immeasurably beyond my de-

sert, yet showing so sympathetic an insight into the possible service of such work, that I saw again, as by a flash, the rich human quality that had already endeared the man.

"And so you worked with the road gang on Bachelor Mountain to get enough to grub stake you to Phœnix?" he said, and he laughed aloud. Then he swore—deeply, resonantly, and from the heart.

Price was sent for on the next day, and, in the afternoon, he turned up in Hamilton's office, a dark, bearded, keen-eyed Irishman, slender and wiry, and all alert at the prospect of getting back to "God's country," which in his phrase meant Arizona. Soon, not merely Hamilton and I, but our friends the barrister and the editor and the grave mine superintendent were involved in preparation for the trip. We accompanied Price to the pawnbroker's shop, where he identified his belongings, and I redeemed them. Then we all set about selecting additional blankets and a fresh store of food.

Our pack animals could not have carried their loads, had we taken all that was pressed

upon us for the journey. Price borrowed a shot-gun from the private arsenal that was put at our disposal, and I a six-shooter, and we gladly accepted gifts of tobacco until our pockets were bursting with plenty.

Weird as it was, our little caravan was but the typical prospector's outfit as we moved in single file through the winding street of the mining camp, an object of interest only to the four friends who bade us good-by with many slaps on the back and with affectionate oaths. Price was mounted on his Indian pony and I on Sacramento, a burro of uncommon size, while our effects were packed on the backs of two other burros, Beecher and California by name, with two of California's foals trotting abreast as a running accompaniment to the show.

Past the shops and saloons and dance-halls and hotels we wound our way on among the frail shanties at the outskirts of the camp, until we struck the wagon trail that led southward through a ranching country in the direction of the pass over the mountain to Durango. Snow lay lightly on the ground; vast tracts,

however, had been swept clear by the wind, so that ours was an unobstructed course, except where we had to plough through occasional drifts, which our animals did with ease, tossing the feathery flakes until they flashed again in the clear sunlight of a frosty morning. The burros were at their best, keeping the trail at a steady pace that never hinted at the habit of wandering. Price was high-spirited at the thought of Phœnix, and, between snatches of song, he regaled me with the glories of the Indian summer which we should find across the range. I could well share his light-heartedness. As far as Creede I had walked alone, picking the way with ease, but, between Creede and Phœnix, there lay a stretch of the fast-fading frontier which I longed to cross on foot, yet knew that I could not without a guide. And here, as by miracle, one had appeared in the person of Price, who knew the land and them that dwelt therein, and who was more than guide in being a philosopher and friend. The keen air quickened our blood, as we breathed deep of its rarefied purity and felt the mild warmth of the winter sun like the glow

of rising spirits. The mountain-peaks rose white and still above the dark ruling of the timber line, yet radiant in the light, and serene in a peace that passeth knowledge; and the head waters of the Rio Grande swept past us in streams that were dark against the snow, but ablaze where they reflected the sun.

It was long past noon before I thought of stopping, and then I found that there were to be no mid-day stops on this expedition, for the days were so short that camp had to be made between four and five in the afternoon, and, as it was difficult to get started in the morning much before eight o'clock, we could give at the best but little more than eight hours in the day to travel.

For some time that afternoon we had been in the shadow of a mountain to the west, and the light was fading fast, when, as we rose upon a knoll above the stream whose bed we were ascending, Price saw that it was a good camping-ground, and the caravan came to a halt. Wood was abundant about us, so that water was soon boiling, and slices cut from a frozen shoulder of beef were presently frying

in the saucepan, while the tea drew to a fearful strength at the fire's edge. After supper and a smoke, we made ready our bed. An old piece of canvas, some seven feet by fourteen, was first spread upon level ground; then we arranged upon half of it all the gunny-sacks that we had brought as cushions for the pack-saddles. These formed a mattress, over which we spread our blankets, drawing up finally the unused half of the canvas as a top covering. Going to bed consisted simply of taking off our boots and folding our coats for pillows, then disappearing with all speed under the blankets, with the canvas drawn well over our heads to keep out the bitter night cold of that altitude in late November. Our animals browsed near the camp, the bells about their necks tinkling as they moved, until they, too, found shelter and settled down to rest.

When I wakened it was from deepest sleep, and I looked out from under cover for some sign of day, but there was none. The stars were shining undimmed, with the effect of nearness which brought back vividly an illusion of childhood. Nothing in their position gave me

a hint of the time, but Price, on waking, saw at a glance that the dawn was near. Scarcely was the fire lit and water put on to boil before the dark bulks of the mountains to the east were clear cut against a brightening sky. Breakfast over and the dishes washed, we had a smoke and, having fed the animals from a little store of grain, we saddled and packed them for the day's march.

Nothing in the previous day's experience suggested the rigor of this afternoon's progress. All went prosperously in the morning, for we were still following the wagon trail, and the burros kept it as by instinct. Only the snow was deepening, which was a reminder of the warnings we received in Creede that we were attempting the pass dangerously late in the year. What with snow and the loss of leaves, the "look" of the region had so far changed since Price passed that way in spring that, with small wonder, he could not find the lead of the foot-trail that crosses the Divide. Again and again we struck in to the left only to discover presently that we were following a false lead, until Price, impatient of further

dallying, boldly led the way in an ascent of a trackless mountain whose farther side, he knew, would disclose the lost trail.

A long, steep climb by a well-trodden way is difficult at the best for pack animals, but we were now in a forest with the course obstructed by undergrowth and the trunks of fallen trees, and the uncertain footing covered with treacherous snow. The burros took it splendidly from the first, straining their muscles in a toilsome climb that was doubly hard because of its obstacles. But as the hours passed and the way grew more difficult, their strength began to fail. Then came long resting spells, followed by spurts of frantic climbing. Again and again we seemed to be nearing the top, only to find the crest of a ridge with another summit towering far beyond. Presently the burros were falling from sheer fatigue. With a few yards of upward struggle, down they would sink exhausted, and, after letting them rest, Price and I had our hands full in dragging them to their feet again.

It was nearing sunset when we gained the top, and, once there, all our troubles vanished.

We passed from the cover of the wood out upon a treeless slope, swept clear of snow and covered by the past summer's growth of grass, brown and dry and excellent fodder. A stream flowed through the natural meadow, and on a ledge above it, as plain as day, was the winding trail making off in the direction of the Divide. We gratefully camped there that night, while our tired beasts gorged themselves with grass.

Whatever the difficulties of crossing were to be, we were clearly not to be hampered by foul weather. The night was as still and cold as the last had been, and the morning again was cloudless. We were up by starlight as before, and the camp-fire was sending volleys of glowing sparks into the surrounding darkness when the signs of dawn appeared. I went to the brook for water and was back just in time to see the sunrise from the camp. We were in a narrow valley that stretched southwestward in an upward trend toward the summit of the range. From its northeastern opening we could see far over a confused mass of mountains whose outlines grew clearer in the

return of day. With infinite majesty the light streamers flung themselves across the sky, paling the bright stars; and, when a distant snow-peak caught the first clear ray, all the others seemed to lift their heads in an ecstasy of praise and welcome. In another moment the eastern wall of our valley was fringed by a tracery of fire, where level beams shone through the trees which stood out against the sky. And last, upon us in the depth of the valley, the sun rose, prodigal of his splendor and of his gifts of light and life.

I had left Price squatting near the fire with his face to the east as he cut slices of bacon into a saucepan. On my return from the brook I found him still sitting there, but grown oblivious to bacon. His forearms were resting on his knees, while loosely in one hand he held a knife and a piece of bacon in the other. From under an old felt hat, long, black, matted hair fell upon his neck and mingled with a dark, unkempt beard. His face, blackened by the smoke of the camp-fire, was lifted to the eastern sky, and his eyes were on the sunrise. Such a look, transfixed with reverence and

wonder, seemed to link him with some early epoch of the race, when the sense of power and beauty awoke in man; and as he drew himself erect without lifting his eyes from the scene before him, "It's not strange," he remarked, "that men have worshipped the sun."

The snow grew deeper with every mile of the march that morning. We were nearing the Divide, and one evidence of it was the piercing wind that blew down the gorge. Not since the morning of the first day out had either of us ridden; for the animals had as much as they could do to carry themselves and their packs, and now we found that we must help them by opening a path through the snow. It lay a foot deep before us, then two feet and more as we mounted the Divide, so that Price and I were soon alternating in the work of breaking a way. One of us would plunge through until fagged out, then the other would take his place in treading down the drift, and so we forged ahead, a few yards at a time, wet to the skin with melting snow and cut to the bone by the wind.

I do not know how far we travelled that

day; it could not have been many miles, and I do not care to think of possible consequences, had we been overtaken by a storm, instead of having the fairest possible winter weather. But we put in more than eight hours of continuous work and were repaid in the late afternoon by reaching camping-ground on the western side of the Divide, almost as good as that which we found for the night before.

The next day's, Tuesday's, march was one that dwells delightfully in memory—not for any element of excitement, but for the simple joy of it. All day we descended by a trail that wound through cañon after cañon, crossing and recrossing the streams whose waters were flowing toward the Pacific, as those of the day before were to find a final outlet in the Atlantic. It was cold, but it seemed like spring in contrast with the day before, for the sun shone bright, and birds were in the trees, and here and there the snow had melted, giving to the soil the suggestion of returning life.

The burros plainly shared the feeling of relief in reaching a more passable region, and the art of burro-punching began, consequent-

ly, to disclose its difficulties. From one side and then the other of the trail they would break away in all directions, exploring the surrounding country, never with an air of mischief, but always with a sober, dogged perversity that was the more exasperating because it wore a mask of reason. Once back into the trail, they might keep it faultlessly for miles on end, and then, from no apparent cause, begin once more to wander. They were most difficult to manage at the fords. Generally they scattered to the four winds at the first approach to water, and when we had corralled them again and forced them down to the brink, they would stand calmly, planted ankle-deep in the stream, resolutely determined not to move. It was then that Price gave vent to real profanity, and I am bound to own that it was effective. When beating and prodding and the milder invective failed to urge the burros forward, Price would stand back, pale with rage, and begin to swear, calling upon all his gods and blasting the reputations of his beasts unto the third and fourth generation of their ancestors. By some subtle

perception they seemed to understand that this meant business, and slowly at first, but presently, as though they rather enjoyed the water, they waded through and started down the trail beyond.

We camped that night in a narrow cañon whose level bed was well grown with trees and walled by scarped cliffs, which rose sheer above it. Price said that it formed a miniature Yosemite, and certainly it made good camping-ground; for with plenty of wood and water, it was well protected from the wind, and we slept there in great comfort. But our fare was growing monotonous. We soon exhausted the supply of beef and had since been living upon bacon and bread, so that we heartily welcomed the sight of a ranchman's cabin near the end of the next day's march, for there we purchased a peck of potatoes and thus enlarged our bill of fare to bacon and "spuds" and bread and gravy.

Thanksgiving-day was celebrated by faring sumptuously in the evening and sleeping under cover. And it was the more delightful celebration for being wholly unpremeditated.

There was no prospect through the day of anything but the usual march and camp in the open at night. We were plainly in a more populous region, for we had struck a wagon-trail again, and repeatedly, in the morning, we met farm wagons laden with solemn families in Sunday dress. As the afternoon wore on we grew hungrier for thinking of Thanksgiving dinners. At dusk we were passing a ranch upon which the hay presses had just ceased working for the day. A little farther down the road we overtook two men who were about to enter a wooden building, which proved to be a deserted school-house. Price hailed them and they turned, standing in the open door. Practised as he was in the amenities of the frontier, it took him no time to strike up an acquaintance, and soon we were bade welcome to share the school-house as a camping-place.

Our hosts were a young American frontiersman and his "partner," an Indian, who together had a contract for pressing hay on the neighboring ranch, and who were living meanwhile in this deserted building. Having

admitted us, they completed their welcome by doing everything in their power for our comfort. They arranged with the owner to pasture our animals on the ranch for the night, and showed us where to find wood for a fire and where on the floor to spread our bed. And when the evening meal was ready, they proposed that we should club together, giving us of their fresh meat and roasted Indian corn and steaming hot bread in exchange for our "spuds" and bacon. But we had some chance of making return, for they had no tobacco to compare with ours, and far into the night we sat talking, over pipes fragrant of good weed.

Price and I were making progress in acquaintance, and every day I had fresh cause for self-congratulation at my extraordinary luck in having fallen in with so good a guide. Of excellent Irish family, Price was not without education and a taste for letters, although he had chosen, almost as a boy, the career of an adventurer on the frontier. And now at middle life, having ranged the Southwest as few men have done, and having seen all phases of its life and shared most of them, he was

looking forward to further casual living, perfectly content so long as he had a camping outfit and could wander as he pleased over the face of nature. That some day he would "strike it rich" he never doubted—and may his faith come true. Meanwhile he was getting a good deal out of life. Nature in her milder moods was a constant solace and a joy to him. In long marches through golden Indian summer days, he sang and spouted verses of his own, and told me veritable Ulysses's tales of men and their strange ways. The few books which he had read he had made his own, for his memory was retentive, and he never forgot, apparently, a face or a name, so that his progress through the country was like a walk about his own neighborhood.

With the instinctive, gentlemanlike reserve of the Western frontiersman, he never questioned me about myself; he was far more interested in what knowledge I might have gathered, which he could add to his own. Oddly enough, it was the little reading that I had done in philosophy that seemed to attract him most. Many a night when it was mild enough

to sleep with our heads uncovered we lay side by side, "overarched by gorgeous night," gazing into the starry firmament, and I would tell him what I could of theories of the universe from Thales to Herbert Spencer, feeling all the while the tension of his mind as he reached out eagerly for these guesses at the mystery of things.

It happened that I had been reading "Conings-by," at Creede, and Prince slipped the copy into his pocket as we left the camp. He devoured it by our camp-fires at night. The story held him, but most of all he was spell-bound by its literary charm, and he added a quaint reason for his liking in the remark:

"You know," he said to me, "Lord Beaconsfield was always square with the Irish."

His national partisanship was of the stanchest, and he had always given to the Irish fund when he could; but the outcome of the fight in Committee Room No. 15 had been too much for him, and he would stoutly maintain that never again, so long as the "traitors" who had turned against Parnell were in the ascendant, would he interest himself in furthering

Home Rule—threads of vital connection which were a little strange, I thought, between points so widely severed as St. Stephen's and the deserts of Arizona.

Elsewhere I have already sketched in outline our trip as we walked south together from Durango to the San Juan, then through the Navajo Reservation to the high plateau of northern New Mexico, where, utterly deserted by fair weather, we camped for a week, while a cold wave swept over us, forcing the thermometer down to ten and twelve degrees below zero, and nearly freezing us and our animals in the still cold of the winter nights.

Even after we got under way again and were making progress southward in the direction of the "rimrock" of the Mogollon Mountains, persistent ill-luck followed us in the shape of almost nightly falls of snow and rain, which added nothing to the comfort of sleeping on the ground or walking across an almost trackless waste. But if we were disappointed here, Price's promise of Indian summer was abundantly fulfilled when once we had waded through the snow in the great

primeval forests that cover the northern slopes of the Mogollons, and made the abrupt descent of the "rimrock." It was like the contrast of Florida with our Northern winter. The live-oak and budding cottonwood and the warm sun and sprouting grass gave us royal welcome from the cold and snow beyond; and, at the end of the first day's journey in this region, we came out upon a ranch. It was thirty miles to the nearest neighbor, and the ranchman and his wife were glad to see anyone, even casual "burro-punchers," like Price and me. There chanced to be a considerable company at the ranch that night. An outfit of three men who were hunting mountain lion through the range for the sake of the bounty on their scalps had come there to camp, bringing with them the carcass of a bear. And the postman, whose beat took him from the Santa Fé line southward through some Mormon settlements and on to scattered ranches north of the Tonto Basin, was also quartered there. So that we sat down more than a dozen strong to dine on bear steak and potatoes and bread and coffee; and when dinner was over, Price and

I again had the good fortune to find that our tobacco suited well the taste of the company. We were gathered now in the living-room of the cabin. Some of the men were seated on the floor and others in rough, hand-made chairs about a wood fire in a large, open fireplace. The talk ranged at random over phases of hard living known to such men as these. It was varied and rich and sometimes racy. In it Price shone as a bright, particular star. None had travelled the Southwest so thoroughly as he, or experienced so much of its characteristic life. Then his native readiness at narrative stood him in good stead, and, penniless prospector that he was, he held unchallenged the centre of the stage.

The door of the dining-room stood open, and, when I had finished my pipe, I joined the ranchman's wife, who sat beside the table in a rocking-chair, holding in her arms her oldest child, a boy of five or six. She seemed glad to have someone to talk to. The conversation at table had swept from end to end in a manner diverting to her, but in which she as little dreamed of joining as a bird would venture

with untried wings into a high wind. She was too delicately reared to be at home in the thickening tobacco-smoke of the living-room and so she was alone with the child, the hired woman being in the kitchen. I praised the country side which she and her husband had chosen as their home, and told her how well it contrasted with a region only a few miles to the north; but, if I found a way to her heart at all, it was in genuine admiration of the boy, whose light hair rested in moist curls about his glowing face, as he lay sleeping in his mother's arms. She was not a discontented woman—far from it; she was young, and her eyes shone with health and with vital interest in the things about her. But it was rarely that she saw anyone from the world outside, and I was a stranger, and when I owned to having been in the Northwest, she told me eagerly that her own people and her husband's lived "back east in Minnesota," where they both were born and bred.

How can I suggest the pathos of it? She was not complaining and yet, as she went on telling me of an earlier time, it was almost as

a captive might have spoken of the wide range of living when he was free. Life in constant contact with her friends and the breadth of their many interests was in such striking contrast to existence on a ranch, with the nearest neighbor thirty miles in the offing, and with never a look from year to year over the rugged hills that formed the horizon.

One could see at a glance the opposite effects of the change upon the two natures. Her husband, native-born and country-bred, like herself, and schooled as a man must be whose bringing up is in a community which draws its blood and traditions pure from New England, yet had become more a frontiersman every year, in whom the memories of earlier things faded fast before the dominant realities of his new surroundings. She, on the contrary, cherished these memories of her own—her home and friends and church associations and Chautauqua circle (she told me particularly of that) until they were enshrined within her, and one could but see that, however loneliness might oppress her, she had an escape which must have furnished at times an enjoyment keener,

perhaps, than any which real experience would have brought.

I have forgotten its name, but I think that it was known as "Young's Valley," a region some distance south of the "rimrock" and north of the hills which hem in the Tonto Basin. There were several ranches there, and a well-defined trail led on, by way of San Reno Pass, to Phœnix. When we entered the valley Price was all for veering off to the southwest and reaching Phœnix by the Natural Bridge, which he wished me to see. We left the trail near the first cabin which we passed in the valley, a deserted cabin for the time, and struck across the grass-grown hills in search of another way. Soon we were in a maze of trails; they were leading in every direction, but they were cattle-paths, and we came upon herds feeding over the winter-brown hills. It was a gently rolling country at the first, where Price had not the smallest difficulty in steering a course; for, although he had never been there before, yet the way had been described to him and he had no fear of losing it. Our only danger lay, apparently, in exhausting our

provisions before reaching an inhabited region beyond. But we thought little of that, and entered light-heartedly enough upon an exploration that was new and attractive to us both.

Trouble began with the weakening of our burros. We had very little grain when we left the Tonto trail, and we counted upon fodder enough from a grazing country. But the grass grew thinner as we went, and the leanness of the cattle attested the leanness of the land, until we began to fear that our beasts would not have strength enough to pull through. Moreover, the country became increasingly rough, so that the effort of travel was the greater. Soon there came a day when our animals were weak and tottering under their loads, and we ourselves had to begin the march on a breakfast of tea and a few boiled beans, which exhausted our store. Still Price was confident of getting through, and, if the burros could hold out, there was prospect of plenty by night.

In the middle of the morning we found lying beside the trail a cow that was plainly dy-

ing. For an hour we worked over her, trying to discover evidences of a wound or of a broken leg, and trying, too, to ease her pain. I left her alive regretfully, but Price advised against shooting her.

Matters grew serious that afternoon. The trail became hopelessly lost, so that not even Price, with his developed instinct, could find it again. We were in the heart of the hills now, with cañons opening in strange confusion about us. One after another we explored them, only to find each a "box-cañon" at the end. Price was sure that our desired country lay just beyond, and it was maddening, late in the day, to acknowledge that he could find no way out but the one by which we entered. It was a sorry retreat; hungry and worn we went supperless into camp. By rare good luck, however, we hit upon camping-ground where there was more grass than we had seen for some time, and in the morning our burros and the pony were comparatively revived, fit again for a hard journey. And we gave it them.

Price and I had had nothing to eat for

twenty-four hours, and very little then. Meanwhile we had been working hard in keen mountain air, and I was so hungry by the time that we got back to the cow, now dead beside the trail, that I proposed our eating some of her. Price quickly put an end to the plan, however, not on hygienic grounds, but by explaining that the cattlemen, if they found her multilated, would conclude that she had been killed, and would make matters lively for us in consequence, hanging being the not uncommon penalty for this offence.

One does not keep close count of days in wandering over a frontier, and it was only an aggravation of our plight to remember that it was not Sunday merely but Christmas-day as well. But if Christmas heightened the sense of hardship, it furnished an admirable setting to its end. By trusting his instinct for a short cut, Price brought us out in the middle of the afternoon upon open hills, from which we not only saw a section of Young's Valley, but, rising clear from the middle of it, a column of blue smoke from the chimney of a ranchman's cabin. We wasted no time in covering the in-

tervening miles and then we lifted, light-heartedly, the latch of the road-gate and, with the easy assurance of the frontier, drove our animals into the yard beside the corral. For some reason we had not been seen from the cabin, so Price walked on to the door, while I mounted guard over the burros. From a seat in the sun on an old hen-coop I could watch them as they nibbled the short grass, while from the cabin came peals of laughter, denoting that Price had fallen among friends who were keeping Christmas festival.

I was willing enough to rest outside, knowing that we had reached a hospitable roof and that a dinner was assured. Sitting there for some time, I presently began to question what was keeping Price, when the cabin-door opened and two women appeared. As they walked down the footpath to the gate, I gathered that they were neighbors returning from a Christmas call. But this was the least interesting inference, and I was totally at a loss for others. The wonder grew as they came nearer. They were young and faultlessly dressed, and one of them was beautiful.

Their dress was of the kind that charms with its perfect simplicity and the air of natural distinction with which it is worn. They rested frank eyes on me for a moment as they passed and nodded pleasantly, speaking their thanks with sweet voices, as I stood holding open the gate. Who they were remained a mystery, and I was content to have it so, for they left me not without a sense of Christmas visitation, which stirred again the memories of my own "God's country."

The ranchman was a Virginian, tall, fair-eyed, and soft of speech, and when he and Price came out together they were stanch friends on the strength of an earlier acquaintance, and we had the freedom of the ranch. We unpacked and corralled the animals and then made ready for dinner. Not for two days had we tasted food, and now we were seated with our host and hostess and their two sons at a table which groaned under sweet potatoes and roast corn and piles of bread and great dishes full of steaming "hog and hominy," and with it all, the best of Christmas cheer. For two days we stayed at the Vir-

ginian's ranch and then, having purchased from him a fresh store of food, we resumed the march by way of the Tonto Basin and Fort McDowell to Phœnix.

On New-year's-day we were camped at Fort McDowell; and, when we set out early on the next morning, there remained but about thirty miles to Phœnix, so we resolved to cover it in a single march. Night found us still some miles from the city, but the night was clear and flooded with moonlight. The moon made plain the way, yet played fantastically over the face of the country. Long reaches of white sand were converted into Arabian deserts, with pilgrim caravans moving across them; the irrigated ranches were transformed into tropical gardens, whose luxuriance was heightened by the exquisite softness of the night, and then there were stretches of uncompromising Arizona desert, dusty and cactus-grown and redolent of alkali.

It was nearing midnight when we entered the town. Price directed the way to a corral where he was known, and where we left the animals feasting on fresh alfalfa, while we

fared forth to see his friends. It was precisely as though Price had invited me around to his club. He led the way to a saloon, and as we entered it, I saw at once its typical character. At the left of the entrance was a bar, gorgeous with mirrors and cut glass, while down the deep recesses of the room were faro and roulette tables and tables for poker. The groups about them were formed of "cow-punchers," and prospectors and "Greasers" and Chinamen, and even Indians, all mingling and intermingling with a freedom that suggested that in gambling there is a touch of nature that makes the whole world kin.

But more immediately interesting to us was a group which stood beside the bar. It was made up, as I found, of politicians, high in territorial office, all of whom knew Price and hailed him cordially while asking after his luck. For some time we stood talking with them, then one of their number, himself not a politician but a business man, proposed our joining him at supper. We accepted, I the more delightedly because he, of all the group, had most attracted me. Tall and very hand-

some, he had the bearing of a gentleman, and what he told me of himself confirmed my own impression of a richly varied past. Far into the night we talked, and I could well believe him when he said that the fascination of the life which he had led on the frontier had so far grown upon him that, while he was glad to go back at times to his former home in New York, he could no longer remain contented there, hearing as he always did after a few months, at most, the call back to the wild freedom of the plains. It was under the spell of what he said, enforced by my little experience as a "burro-puncher," that I went to sleep that night on a bed of alfalfa in the corral; and when I wakened in the morning and found letters urging my return to the East, I was conscious of an indifference to the idea which was wholly new to my experience.

INCIDENTS OF THE SLUMS

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IF anything is wanting to darken the picture of life in city slums, it is a sense of the needlessness of much of the suffering. And this is the sense which I cannot escape in looking back upon a winter in Chicago, from the vantage point of nearly a year of walking and working through regions west of that city. I left Chicago in May of 1892, and entered San Francisco in February of the following year, having gone on foot, in the meantime, through Illinois and southern Minnesota and western Iowa, and almost from end to end of Nebraska and Colorado and through some of New Mexico and much of Arizona and California. It was not in the character of a tramp, but as a wage-earner, that I made the journey; and the only notable fact about it was that I not only never lacked for labor, but I almost never had to ask for it, having scores of

opportunities of work pressed upon me by employers hard up for hands. I am well aware of the abnormal in my experiment and of its little worth apart from the value of experience to myself, and I know how slight a connection with the deeper causes which give rise to congestion in labor centres the fact of ready employment in the country may have. Yet, as one result of personal contact, I cannot help seeing much of the misery of the mass in the light of individuals suffering wretchedly for want of knowledge of a better chance.

We speak in old-fashioned phrase of a city's slums as though they were a local evil in the town, quite remote in connection with the rest of the corporate whole, while in truth we know, in our haunting, new-found knowledge of social solidarity, that they form a sore which denotes disease in every part of the body politic. The conviction grows upon us that it is often at the cost of much suffering to our kind that we have food to eat and raiment to put on, and the immunity from personal responsibility which once we felt in paying high prices for our wares is fast being undermined

by increased acquaintance with the ramifications of the "sweating system." Indeed, we seem to see that, from the very frame of things, if one enjoys, another suffers, and that the unwitting oppressors of the poor are often the poor themselves, while the destruction of the poor is their poverty. Men tell us that things were growing worse, and that hope lies that way, because it points to ultimate dissolution and a new order. I find it impossible to share this form of optimism, and I cannot see that things are really getting worse, but rather incomparably better as measured, for example, by the standard of the last century of industrial progress. And so far from seeing hope in a belief that matters are getting worse, I find it rather in the view that much that is worst in modern life is fast becoming intolerable in a society which grows increasingly conscious of vital interdependence and relationship. Meanwhile the concrete facts remain, and here is a glimpse of some of them as they appear in a partial record of fragments of two days' experience in Chicago.

I was working as a hand-truckman in a fac-

tory far out on Blue Island Avenue. My wages were $1.50 a day, and I was paying for board and lodging, in a tenement across the way, $4.25 a week. As one result, I was saving money and would soon be able to leave the job and write up my notes, while widening my acquaintance with the town before looking for other work. Already I had a little knowledge of the city. For two weeks after entering it I had been among its unemployed and had suffered some and had seen the real suffering among others of my class, before I found occupation in a West-side factory.

It was during those two weeks that I came to know a widow, with whom this tale is first concerned. I met her early in December; it was now nearing the end of January, and we factory hands were marking with delight the lengthening of the days, for we were beginning to have a little daylight left when work was over. At last one afternoon the setting sun came pouring through the kitchen window while we were washing up for supper at Mrs. Schultz's boarding-house. That was because it was Saturday, and we had quit at five

o'clock, being given, as was the custom in the factory, a half hour on Saturday afternoons.

The usual week's end excitement was running high among the men. Gibes and louder talk than common were rife, as black hands and faces came white from soap and successive basins of hot water. Some of the men were going in the evening to a "show," others to a "fancy-dress ball," and a few were saying nothing. We scattered widely after supper, leaving the house to the family, which must have been a welcome change to them, for generally, through the week, we all foregathered in the sitting-room at night and romped with the children and played cards until bed-time.

Mrs. Stone will serve as the widow's name, and my first errand that evening took me to her home, which was in the basement of a building on Boston Avenue. We were both concerned in pressing a claim which she had upon her husband's people, a highly just claim, I thought; for he had deserted her some time before his death, leaving her alone in the support of herself and their two children. Why she had ever come to the city, I could

never make clearly out, beyond what had seemed to be to her a strong appeal to her reason that, if she must make her own living and the children's, she could hope to do it better in town than in the country where she was born and bred. And the marvel was that she had succeeded in keeping them all alive. The city had, of course, furnished an awful disillusionment. The children proved an insuperable barrier to employment at domestic service, and, failing to find any other labor, she was rescued finally from starvation by getting a job from a "sweater." She deserved success, for she was an heroic creature. To hear her describe the struggle, you would gather that hers had been the best of luck. She merely wanted a chance to work, so that they might live; and had she not found it, just when she thought, for lack of it, that they must starve?

From the sweater's shop she would carry the goods two miles to her home, walking both ways, for she could not afford car-fare. Then all day and through much of the night she made the garments. They were boys' waists,

and the materials, ready cut, besides the necessary thread and buttons, were furnished her. There was left for her to do all the remaining work, down to sewing on the buttons and making the button-holes, and she was paid for the finished waists at the rate of thirty-five cents a dozen.

It was hard, she did admit, to feed and clothe her family and pay the rent on a wage-rate like that, and she was near to going under when another and a crowning stroke of fortune fell. In answer to a notice tacked on her door, two women, who worked in a neighboring book-bindery, applied for board, and each agreed to pay two dollars a week. The five then lived together in the basement-room, whose furniture consisted chiefly of dry-goods boxes, but the boarders took kindly to the home and the children, and things had gone comfortably ever since. Gradually the children, a boy of nine and a girl two years younger, were learning to help at some of the simpler forms of sewing and in the housework.

This, I beg to interpolate, was the small be-

ginning of Mrs. Stone's success. Having shrewdness as well as energy, she soon discovered that keeping boarders was more profitable than making waists, and so she developed that side of her enterprise. When I saw her last, in the following May, she was mistress of a well-appointed mechanics' boarding-house on Milwaukee Avenue, but her troubles had taken new form, for the contamination of the slums had begun to appear in her son, who was fast developing into an incorrigible, and she had sent for me in order to consult about a plan of placing him in a reformatory.

But to return to the February evening, on which I called to talk with Mrs. Stone about a claim upon her husband's people: I found her at home. One ran little risk of failing to find Mrs. Stone at home, her engagements abroad being confined to trips to the sweater's shop for materials. I heard the swift clatter of her sewing-machine as I walked down the steps from the filthy pavement to the door of the basement where she lived. The room had always to me an effect of being brilliantly lighted. It was due to the illumination of

two large lamps which were kept faultlessly clean and were burning often in the day as well as night, and in part to the general cleanliness of the room, not to mention the cheerfulness which radiated from Mrs. Stone. She turned from her machine as I drew up an empty soap-box and sat down in front of her, and one would have thought, from the contagion of her manner, that she never knew any mood but one of hopeful courage. But she had no time to spare, and when our talk was ended, she turned again to work, while I went over to another corner and chatted with the children and the boarders.

I was waiting for my friend Kovnitz, whom I had asked to meet me there. Kovnitz was himself employed in the same trade as Mrs. Stone, although in quite another branch of it. He was a coatmaker, and had been brought up to work under the sweating system. Much of the value of his acquaintance, apart from my personal liking for him, lay for me in his thorough knowledge of the trade. He was a socialist, and a very ardent one; but his efforts for reform were directed mainly toward effect-

ing organization among the workers of his kind, and with this I warmly sympathized. We were to go together in the evening to a gathering of the cloak-makers, and, when he appeared at Mrs. Stone's, we lost no time in starting for the meeting-place on the South-side.

One was never at a loss for conversation with Kovnitz, but it was always conversation which had to do with the condition of his class. That was uppermost and foremost in his mind. Other things interested him only as they were related to that. Although a collectivist, he wasted little thought upon a future socialistic state, and he cared little for present concerted political action in his party. The one supreme necessity, in his view, was that all wage-earners should be led to act together as a class, until their predominance in an industrial age is recognized. When once wage-workers are known to be the most powerful as a class, then social institutions will change in accordance with their interests. It was curious to see how this, the central principle of his creed, absorbed him. It was the criterion of all his

judgments, and it gave color and meaning to everything he saw. Generally he noticed little of what was about him. The inferno of those city streets at night seemed not to impress him as we passed. All the varied play of life upon them did not divert him from preoccupation in what he was telling me of the work of organization among wage-earners. Once only his attention was drawn off, and even then his habitual cast of thought moulded the new impression. In glancing up, his eyes had fallen upon a building newly occupied as a department store. It was Saturday evening, and, for some reason, the place was still open. Streams of shoppers were entering the doors and pouring from them. More even than by day, the store gave at night an impression of a bee-hive in full activity. The swarming of the crowds within, the lights from a hundred windows, and the brave array of goods formed the outer picture. But Kovnitz said nothing of that.

"There are two men in that store who are as different in general character as men can be," he remarked to me, as we stood at the curb.

"One of them," he went on, "is a man of scholarly instincts. He is a disciple of Kant, and knows the Kantian philosophy well. Just now he is giving his leisure to reading Goethe. He is an enthusiast in philosophy and literature, and a man of really fine sensibilities. The other chap is a human brute, and looks it. Nothing interests him beyond his business and his dissipations. Both of these men are at the head of departments of ready-made garments in the store, and I know that they both draw salaries of $4,000 a year. They have good business heads, and manage their departments well, but what makes them specially valuable to their employers is the fact that they know thoroughly the sweating system. They keep carefully informed on the condition of the labor market, and the demand for work; and, when the competition is keenest among the sub-contractors and the workers, they know how to pit the bidders against one another, until the tasks are finally let out at the lowest possible figures. Mrs. Stone is making boys' waists for thirty-five cents a dozen, and there are more than 20,000 sweatshops in Chi-

cago where similar prices prevail, and Chicago is but one of a score of cities in this country where sweating is in vogue."

Late that night, after the labor meeting, I was passing the store again. I was alone, for Kovnitz had gone home another way. The street lay quiet, and almost deserted through its length, and I could hear the echo of my tread under the glare of electrics. The sound of jangling music came faintly from a long line of almost continuous saloons. There was some movement in front of them which contrasted sharply with the general desertion of the street.

One is rarely at a loss to trace the antecedents of a sharp impression, and I can remember clearly that I was conscious of a man and woman who stood talking in low tones as I passed, and who disappeared that moment into an open passage. The next instant I was keenly alive to them, for I heard the woman scream as though in mortal fear, and turning, I saw the man dragging her violently out upon the pavement. Events followed one another then in quick succession. I was near

enough to watch them at close range, and I had the sense of interpreting them as they moved. I saw the instant flash of anger in the face of a young mechanic who stood near, and the first quick thrust of his arm which sent the man reeling from the girl, then the swift onslaught of the two men, and I heard the rain of blows and oaths, and the loud asseverations of the one attacked that he was an officer, while the crowd thickened about them, and the girl pleaded piteously to be loosed from the grasp of someone who held her.

Two officers in uniform came down upon us from opposite quarters, and the fighting gave way to noisy explanations. It developed then that the attack had been made upon an officer in citizens' clothes who was doing detective duty against street-walkers. But he was wholly to blame for the disturbance, I thought; for he had handled his prisoner with needless violence, and the blow from the mechanic was so obviously the instinctive, chivalrous act of a man who sees a woman ill-treated. Technically, however, he was guilty of "resisting an officer while in the discharge of his

duty," and he must answer for it, so that the group which started for the Harrison Street Station-house was made up of the three officers, the girl, the mechanic, and four or five stragglers, of whom I was one.

It was easy to learn at the station what course the case had taken. Both prisoners were admitted to bail, and bondsmen having been found, they went free that night under a charge to appear before the court on a certain morning of the following week. When the morning came I was on hand too, for by that time I had given up my job in the factory.

I went early, not knowing at what hour the case might come up, and, although there were already many persons seated on the wooden forms, I looked carefully through both of the court-rooms without seeing those in whom my interest lay. Finding a vacant seat in the inner room, I sat there, watching intently the changing groups at the bar. They were made up of the commonest criminals of the town, and it was rare that a novice appeared to disturb the atmosphere of perfect naturalness. Law-breakers they were without question; the

magistrate knew them as well as the police, and frequently he spoke to them by familiar names, reminding them of earlier warnings and threatening them with severer penalties for the future. It was a sort of clearing-house, where a certain residuum of habitual criminals was dealt with by a doctrine of averages in an effort to regulate and control the crime inevitable in a great city.

Sitting beside me on the form was a young girl, plainly dressed, with an air of perfect neatness. Her gloved hands lay folded in her lap and in one of them she held a purse. Her mackintosh of dark material was unbuttoned and thrown open, with the cape falling loosely over her arms. It was the trimness of her hair and a certain trig simplicity in her hat which struck me first, and, when she spoke, the tone and manner were in keeping with her quietness of dress.

"Will you tell me, please, what time it is?" she asked, and, having learned the hour, "What are *you* up for?" she continued, abruptly.

There was nothing about her which had in

the least prepared me for the question, and I floundered about in an explanation that I was there merely out of interest in a case which I expected to come up in the course of the morning.

She smiled wearily at that, regarding me with eyes which asked whether I knew how young I was and how dreary that sort of thing made her feel. I was afraid that I had cut short the conversation and was delighted when she continued, quite simply:

"*I'm* up for shop-lifting. It was at Walker's, and it was the hardest luck, for I had everything well concealed. But they suspected me, and, when they brought me here, the matron searched me and soon found the goods. And there I was, red-handed! Now I'm trying to think up some story, but the judge knows me and he warned me well last time."

It was charming then, for we fell to talking as though we had known each other long. Her small gray eyes that looked straight into mine were as frank and innocent as a child's. There was little beauty but an entire com-

posure in the lines of her face, heightened by a natural pallor very becoming to her. Her features betrayed no nervousness, and one saw the change of feeling only in her eyes and in a subtle quality in her smile which was expressive and sometimes sweet.

We were two children, who had met by chance, and, sitting there in the dingy light of a station-house court-room, we were presently unaware of anything but the fact that we had a great deal to tell each other. I told her of the mechanic and the girl, and she half believed me, and, in turn, began to tell me of herself. There was no system in her story, only a simple sequence of spontaneity that charmed me. I had but to listen and watch her inscrutable face and ask questions where my dull intuitions were at fault. In the foreground was the incident of shop-lifting, and running from that was a chain of events which led back inevitably into the distant perspective of memory. She had never an air of giving me her confidence, rather of speaking freely as man to man.

It was bad to be caught at shop-lifting, and

the more annoying because she had so often carried it off with success. At the best, shop-lifting was a wretched business, entailing much anxiety both in getting and disposing of the goods. But there was the stubborn fact that one must live. Of course she had worked as a shop-girl earning $3.50 a week. And here she began to count up on her fingers the items of bare subsistence with their cost, and the smile with which she concluded was touched with the question, "When you have spent your all upon mere living, what have you left to live on?" There had been something of this idea in her protest to her employer, and he met her frankly with the assurance that, if she found it impossible to live on her wages, it would give him pleasure to introduce her to a "gentleman friend." Other employments which were open to her were no better in point of wages; some of them were not so good, but they were all alike in offering relief by the way suggested at the department store.

"I'm not what you'd call a 'good girl,'" she said, "only, you know, I'd so much rather die than do that."

And the revulsion of the child's nature against what to her was this infinite terror led her to tell me of her bringing up. Her memory did not go back to the beginning of her stay in a convent near Dublin, where her parents placed her to be taught. Life had begun for her in the peaceful routine of the sisterhood. All her deepest impressions were got there, and, when as a child of twelve, she came out to emigrate with her people to America, she was instantly in a new world on leaving the convent walls. It had been an almost overwhelming discovery to her to find that the standards of goodness and purity which prevailed within were apparently almost unknown outside the convent. It staggered her intelligence as a child, and, during a long experience of earning her living as a girl, she had slowly constructed a philosophy of life which was drawn from the facts of hard struggle with a world which seemed bent upon compassing her ruin.

She spoke reverently of the teachings of the sisters, and of the influence of their devoted work. "But you know," she added, "I can-

not believe any longer that only those are Christians who are members of the Catholic Church, and that all others will be lost. The world would be too horrible, if that were true. To be a Christian must be simply to follow Christ."

It was from this revery that we were roused by the loud calling of her name. I watched her walk to the bar and stand there with perfect composure, while the clerk read the indictment, and the witnesses were mechanically sworn, and the girl was heard, and the magistrate gave his verdict.

"Minnie," he said, in closing, "I told you, when you were here last, that the next time you came up, you should go to the Bridewell, and now to the Bridewell you shall go. Minnie, why can't a smart girl like you be decent?"

Her profile was toward me, and I saw a faint smile play for a moment on the clear lines of her face.

"Your honor," she replied, "it is a little late now, but when I began to earn my living I wanted nothing so much as the chance to be decent."

Meanwhile, two reporters were quickly sketching her where she stood—a singularly well-poised figure—while others were noting the salient facts of the case; for it was a good "story," having already attracted attention. With wide notoriety as a thief, she went to prison that day, and, when she came out, a not too hospitable world was the more on its guard against her. An officer accompanied her from the room, but she did not forget to nod to me and smile as she passed out.

Engrossed as I had been in Minnie, I had not noticed the coming of the mechanic and the girl whose case had drawn me there. I saw them now when I looked around. The sight of the girl was perplexing at first, for she sat with another woman at the end of a neighboring form, and they looked so much alike that I could not distinguish the one who was there on trial. Crossing the passage, I asked leave to sit beside them. They drew up at once to make room for me, and I saw then that the girl next me was the prisoner. The other was a twin sister, as she frankly told me, and the resemblance fully sustained her. I ex-

plained that I had come to the station-house because I happened to see the affair of a few nights before, and was anxious to find what course it would take in court. The girl agreed with me that the mechanic was in no way to blame.

"He never know'd that it was an officer that was draggin' me down the steps, and out into the street. I never know'd it neither till I see his star under his coat. I thought he was crazy, and was goin' to kill me like 'Jack the Ripper.'" She was a girl in age, and obviously one of the most helpless of her order.

There is a common impression that such women are attracted to their ruin by vanity and a love of dress. You lose that idea among the wrecks who walk the city streets at night. Anything to flatter their vanity or to gratify their taste is the least likely of all possible experiences to most of them. It is a matter of keeping soul and body together. Some are dexterous pick-pockets, who make large hauls at times—not always, however, for themselves; most are ill-fed, ill-dressed slaves, who,

when their tributes are paid, are penniless. Any degree of viciousness may be found among them, and you may find as well a high degree of the innocence of the unmoral, the sense of morality completely lost in the instinct of self-preservation.

The girl beside me was like fragile porcelain, her thin lips and nostrils and delicate skin all marred by a pasty, white unwholesomeness. There was a hectic flush in her sister's face and her eyes were ablaze with disease. We were talking about the case and drifted naturally into further talk about themselves. They were orphans and had long supported themselves by working in a tobacco factory, but there their health had failed, and when they were well enough to work again, they found employment in a laundry. To supplement the "sweating" wages, they had taken to street-walking, and then their end was near. But they spoke as frankly of this last as a "business" as of the earlier occupations, and you saw that, to their thinking, it was only a degree more complete a sale of soul and body.

"But business is poor," the ill sister was saying, presently, "and I ain't very well, which I wouldn't mind, but there's my baby, and, if anything happens to me, who's goin' to take care of him? You don't think I've got consumption, do you?" And she turned upon me a face with the cheeks sunk to the bone and the eyes dilating with the fire which was burning out her life.

When our case came up, it went through without a hitch. The officer told his story with a pompousness that was due to wounded pride and he dwelt over-much upon his efforts to make his assailant understand from the first that he himself was a member of the force. The girl was simplicity and frankness itself; not an effort to conceal her character, but a straightforwardness about the officer's brutal roughness which threw it into strong relief. But the young mechanic was the best. He was new to courts as he abundantly proved, and when his turn came to testify, he stood licking his dry lips like one with stage-fright. Speech came haltingly from him at the first, while his face flushed, but the sense of injustice

urged him on to a perfectly clear statement of how, while "doing the town," he had seen this girl ill-treated and had struck the man without knowing that he was an officer.

I knew that all was well, for I saw a smile pass vaguely now and then over the magistrate's face, and when he spoke, the girl was dismissed with a fine and the young mechanic with a friendly warning against "doing the town," while the officer was held up in open court for reproof and told that, if he knew no better how to handle his prisoners, he was ignorant of the first principles of the special service to which he had been assigned.

It is only a few steps from the station-house to the heart of the business section of the city. I passed through it now, as I often did, for the sake of the feeling that it gives one of the reach and strength of the industrial forces which are centred there. Here is no sense of failure or of loss, but of energy and skill trained to high efficiency in the co-operation of productive powers. Men are there producing for all mankind, and in spite of the pres-

ent waste of human life, I cannot doubt that, with the problems of production so widely solved, the genius of the race is turning surely to the subtler questions of a fairer distribution.