

How Jack Simpson Found Promotion

I.

"Don't you like meat now, daddy?"

Jack Simpson smiled wearily at the question of his little daughter, Beatrice, and she prattled on without waiting for an answer. "Cause you never have any, you know; and there's hardly ever anythin' in the cupboard now. I wants some milk for supper; please, mamma, let me have some milk."

"No, no, dearie," said Mrs. Simpson, a very young and handsome-looking mother; "here, have this piece of bread and a drink of water. Come, there's a good girl; I must take you off to bed now."

Dearie was put to bed, and when they were left alone in the kitchen together dearie's father and mother looked earnestly into each other's eyes. Then dearie's father pushed a large knife across the table and held out both his hands.

"Cut 'em off!" he said, hoarsely; "nobody wants 'em. There's nothing for 'em to do. Cut 'em off!"

"Don't, Jack, don't," she pleaded; "work will come and we shall pull round all right. For my sake, do nothing desperate Jack. Don't give up hope; you will get work."

"And where shall I get work?" he retorted, bitterly. "They have done with me at Fairlow's, and I've tried and tried—Heaven knows how I've tried! And I'm getting tired of being told there's nothing for me; I'm tired of seeing you getting paler and thinner—she moved closer to him and ran her fingers through his thick brown hair—and I'm tired of hearing our little girl ask for things, little bits o' things, we can't give to her. Something will have to be done." He clenched his fist savagely.

"Something will have to be done quickly. I can't understand Hodder; he plays me on and off, half promises, and then says he can't start anyone for weeks. And he smiles when he says it. Smiles just like he did when he gave me a weeks notice with profound regrets, as he put it, at Fairlow's having no further use for my services. I hate him when I think of it. Only yesterday I begged of him to find me something to do, if only for the sake of you and the little 'un. He shook his head and said he was sorry, and smiled! Sometimes I think—why, what's the matter, Jess?"

"Nothing, dear; why do you ask?"

"Your cheeks—they are red as poppies. They remind me of the old days. Ah, Jess, dear, what a sad mistake you made to marry a mere workman."

"A very sad mistake indeed," she said, as she contradicted the words with a kiss.

"You might have been Mrs. Who-knows-who," he went on, half serious, half chaffing.

"I'd rather be Mrs. I-know-who," she answered, returning his fond look with interest; and then, timidly "Jack, dear, I can't bear to see you looking so wild and reckless as you did a short time ago. A little patience will surely bring us into the sunshine again. Think how you have striven, with my poor influence to lift yourself out of the rut. Why here's Mr. Bernaby to see you. I wonder if he brings good news."

But Mr. Bernaby was in no hurry to disclose news of any kind whilst she was present, so she left them for a while to themselves. Her departure was evidently a relief to the visitor. He nervously placed four shillings on the corner of the table and said that he was sorry he would not be bringing any more relief from the club. It had been stopped at the last meeting. Couldn't say as to how his mates had voted against the small weekly subscription they had been giving. Couldn't say that he liked the job of carrying such disagreeable news. Could say as how they was all sorry, and that they hoped he would soon get another place. Could say as how it was no use trying Hodder. Could also say as how Hodder was slow, but he was sure and he was cunning, and surely Jack Simpson had not forgotten that he, a mere sub-foreman, had carried off the lovely Jessie Reville from under his very manager's nose. Could say as how it was a very nasty, raw evening for anyone to be out, and that he wished him a very good-night.

And so, when she came in, she found Jack still brooding over his wrongs, with a new light illuminating their cause, and wandering nearer and nearer towards the abyss of despair. "Jess," he said, eagerly, "I remember you telling me that Hodder paid you some attentions before we were married. Did he ever ask—"

Her cheeks turned into poppies again. "Yes," she said, "he asked me to marry him. I told you all about it, but you made light of it then."

"Of course," he said, "and it never occurred to me that it might have touched him seriously. Besides it is over five years ago, and yet his lovely, more serene nature would perhaps never forget. Jess—he waved his arm vaguely round the almost empty room—"Jess, can this be a deliberate scheme of revenge?"

She nodded her head, whispering, "I'm sure of it. I felt sure of it from the first," and his eyes blazed up with desire to strike back.

"Revenge," he said slowly, "is a

game for two. How blind I have been! I might have known. You knew, Jess. You know, and yet you let me go to him and plead for your sake and the little 'un. Knowing this, you let me go."

"Our need was so great," she answered.

"And I," he went on, "have entrusted him with my one great hope—a secret even from you, Jess. I had an idea for a patent process that might be worth thousands to Fairlow's. In our extremity I confided it yesterday to Sefton Hodder, and sought his advice as to it being practicable. He thought it would be no use; said I might leave the drawings for consideration, but felt sure they would be a failure. Of course, he thought they would be no use. O, fool, fool, that I was!"

She covered her face with a cry of astonishment. "Your ring, your wedding ring," he exclaimed; "where is it?"

"I pawned it," she replied; "we must not starve. We must make a fight of it. Don't think it did not hurt me to part with it, but it can really make no difference. I pawned it two days ago and you have only just noticed. Don't be angry with me, Jack. Leave go my wrists; you hurt me."

"What a success for him," he said, gravely, "to have already removed the ring. You are right; we must make a fight of it."

"Nothing wrong, and nothing desperate, Jack," she pleaded.

"Nothing wrong or desperate," he promised. But there was an expression in his eyes she had never seen before. Later she said to him: "Revenge is not a game for two, dear. If it was it would go on and on without stopping. It is not even sweet as they say it is. Promise me you will attempt no harm to Sefton Hodder. You look so queer, Jack, I am afraid—for you!"

"I promise," he said.

But in his heart he knew he lied.

On the following night he went out about eight o'clock. She kissed him in the doorway and whispered again: "Nothing wrong, and nothing desperate, Jack," and he solemnly answered: "Nothing to be ashamed of, Jess." Yet a tempest of violence raged within him as he swung down the dark, lonely road. What his actual purpose was he could not himself have told.

One thing was uppermost in his mind—he must see Hodder at once. And with the four shillings that Bernaby had left he had picked up an ugly-looking, second-hand revolver. He fingered this in his pocket as he went along. If it were not for the sake of Jess and the little 'un—No, no, he must not think of that. But he must have his drawings back at any cost. He almost felt elated at the task before him. It would be an easier fight, surely, than the fight of the past few weeks, the fight with those gaunt leaders to extremes—hunger and cold and despair.

Fairlow's huge foundry, standing in the valley before him, shines out in a glow of its own making—smoke and flame and roaring furnaces and towering chimneys. He has heard they are to cast the stern frame of a great ship between half-past nine and ten. That will mean Hodder superintending, so that he must be on the works until a late hour. "Nothing to be ashamed of, Jess," he had said. But deep in his heart he knew that he had lied.

II.

Knowing the place intimately, it was an easy matter for Jack Simpson to slip past the time-house and into the great works of Fairlow's. The night was almost pitch dark, but he knew his way and never faltered. On past the dark, closed warehouses and pattern-shops, over the bridge and down the railway, past huge stacks of coal and iron; now over a waste piece of ground scattered with giant cog-wheels, ships' anchors, old boilers, cylinders and the like.

Hist—someone is coming this way. He dives under a waggan, jumps a low wall, and finds himself beside the casting-shop, which seems to revel in the hum and throb and glow of the night's work. About twelve feet from the ground there are large gaps with iron bars across to take the place of windows. He climbs upon a heap of scrap-metal and peers through one of these. It is a familiar scene to him—the long shop with its earthen floor littered with moulding-boxes and tools and strange machines.

Here men are busy shaping the pliable clay into many fantastic shapes; there, fierce, rough-hewn fires are baking them dry in readiness to receive the molten steel. There is the dull thud of hammers falling on sand and dirt, and the shriller rattle of metals in conflict where the castings are being cleaned. In the centre of the shop a vast pit shows the upper moulded portions of the stern for a mighty ship. At the far end the furnaces roar like ravenous beasts as they are fed by ton after ton of raw ores and metals by men stripped to the waist.

Further on, across a platform, above and past the furnaces, is the office of the manager, Sefton Hodder. He has just come out, across the platform and down the gangway. He puts on a pair of blue glasses and looks into these roaring furnaces; then blows a whistle. A monstrous overhead crane rattles along just under the roof and lowers an enormous bucket-shaped cauldron beneath the level of the furnace tap. Another whistle, scarcely heard above the thud of hammers, and a stream of molten steel is rushing in-

to that gigantic bucket. A dozen workmen prepare with long iron bars to steady it. None of that white-hot liquid stream must escape and strike anything damp or else—

Sefton Hodder, sharply outlined against the blinding glare of the molten steel smiles grimly as the sparks fall in brilliant showers round him, and little thinks that at the moment he forms a vivid human target. For Jack Simpson, black hatred in his heart, is glancing along the barrel of his revolver, with his finger trembling on the trigger and his soul trembling on the verge of that awful precipice, murder! An almost uncontrollable passion to end things then and there takes possession of him. Still, better to wait a little while, and then—the top entrance, and face to face in his office. The drawings are there. Who can guess what card Hodder will play when faced with a climax? Best to come armed, anyway. And if the pistol has to be used, why, what a feeble spark it will be amidst all this roar and flame and clanging stir. How terrified Jess would be if—Ah, he will soon be away now.

The furnaces are empty and the bucket, containing many tons of molten steel, is being carried over to the mould. Sefton Hodder stands upon an iron box about three feet from the ground level, and is ready to give the final order to remove the bucket-plug. Then suddenly he looks up at the chains above and shouts with horror. One of the side pivots is bending, breaking. There is a wild shout from the men as they rush for the door, and that mighty cauldron of hissing, seething steel turns over and runs like a fiery lake on the floor. Swift as some bursting dam it darts its fiery way, fed deeper by the swinging bucket. Sefton Hodder, looking which way to escape, pauses a moment too long. Like a flash the metal surrounds the mould he is on and he stands, as it were, on an iron island amid a lake of white-hot running steel. Above the noise and confusion he hears someone screaming—"Run for your lives."

Run? Yes, but how can he cross this burning moat? The heat is terrific. He sees the steel forcing a channel down to number five pit, which contains water. If it reaches there—the thought sets him shuddering. Have they all escaped but him? The heat is scorching, suffocating, and it will take hours for this mass of steel to cool and set—hours; why, long before that he will be literally baked alive. Will none of them come to save him? No, no; they will not risk the explosion until it is too late. The growing fear of a horrible death overwhelms him, and he screams with terror. Then someone dashes through the door, beats his way through the hands that try to stop him, runs nimbly up the foot-ladder and along the wide baulks that hold the rails for the crane.

Look, he is clinging now to the chain. "Lower," he shouts, and lower he comes; down, down, until he swings as close to that terrible liquid bed as the man he is trying to save. "Forward!" he roars, and there is the click of levers, the hiss of steam, and the rattle of the ponderous crane. "Hold," he screams, as he lurches forward, seizes Hodder, and clings to him with wonderful strength. For a moment it seems as though both must slip and crash to their doom, and then, tightly clasped together, rescuer and rescued are swung clear of the burning lake, and on into safety. And the last thing Sefton Hodder notes ere he sinks into unconsciousness is a confused babel of voices, and above them all someone loudly clamoring for cheers for brave Jack Simpson.

For a week Jack Simpson lay delirious—a week of great anxiety and terrible tension to his wife. Over and over again had he gone through the incidents of that memorable night. In his wanderings she learnt of the dark purpose he had brooded upon; how he had seen the awful position Sefton Hodder had been placed in; how, at sight of a fellow-creature in such horrible danger, he had come to his normal senses, flung the pistol from him, and resolved to save the man who had schemed to wreck his happiness.

"Jess," he said, almost the first intelligent words he spoke as he clung to her in recognition; "I didn't do it, Jess; thank Heaven, I didn't do it."

"Hush, dear," she said, "you never could have done it; your nature would not let you. No one knows but us and the doctor that you were so cruelly tempted. And we are all to forget that. Let us start now and never refer to it again."

"Daddy," cried Miss Beatrice Simpson running to his bedside, "why don't you get better? There's such a lot of nice things waiting for you."

"Yes," said her mother, "and I have a letter to read when you are strong enough."

"If it is good news," he said, with a feeble smile, "I've the strength of a giant now."

"It is a long letter," she said, "and the doctor's orders are strict. But its chief contents are that Fairlow's wish to buy your new process and the price they offer is £1,500. They also wish to know if you will undertake to put it into operation and run it at their American works at a salary of—"

"Don't kill me with kindness," he said.

"Big boats go to 'Merica," interrupted Miss Beatrice, with the usual alertness of young eyes and young ears.

"The letter," went on Mrs. Simp-

son, "is signed by Sefton Hodder. He deeply regrets, and is full of gratitude to you for so nobly saving his life. He says you would have been justified in leaving him to his fate, and he can never sufficiently reward you."

"Poor Hodder. For a moment, Jess, for just the flash of a moment, I leapt with exultation when I saw him doomed; my mind swung like a pendulum between evil and good; then—but there, we all have a glorious impulse sometimes! And to think, Jess, that this means a new start for us—a fresh start in a new country."

They were silent for a moment, and then they laughed quietly together. Miss Beatrice was holding the kitten up by its paws in the corner, and saying: "Tend to me, puss, 'cause you are going to 'Merica, you know. You will have to cross the sea in a big, big boat. Now, how long, fink you, will it take to pack our fingers?"—London Tit-Bits.

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A CONFUSION OF TONGUES.

Over 5000 Different Languages in the World.

For the past four months Mr. J. Collier has been contributing to Knowledge a series of interesting articles on the struggle for existence in sociology, and in the current number of that publication he deals with the question of languages and dialects. There are, he tells us, over 5000 distinct languages spoken amongst men, a fact which will come as a surprise to Chauvinistic Britishers, who imagine the English language is all but universal over the whole surface of the globe. But while there are this number of separate languages, a calculating prodigy would be needed to accurately compute the number of different dialects in use. In Brazil there are sixty different vocabularies in vogue; in Mexico the Ualma language is broken up into 700 dialects; in Borneo there are hundreds; while in Australasia it is found impossible to classify the lingual complexities prevailing. Generally the number of dialects is in inverse proportion to the intellectual culture of the population.

Taking the total of languages at 5000, and assuming no more than fifty dialectical variations to each, a total of a quarter of a million dialects is reached. In this confusion of tongues all manner of cases and moods, tones and inflections strive for predominance, while modes of utterance dictated by differently modified laryngeal organs struggle for superiority. But dialects have now a tendency to decrease, more especially among civilized communities where the facilities for traveling by railway and steamboat mix people up much more than was ever possible in the days of old, when inter-communication was difficult. Savage and partially civilized people, as well as those isolated in more or less inaccessible valleys, from free intercourse with their fellows, still retain their ancient dialects, but in nearly every country speech is becoming more uniform, and it is every year less and less difficult for the natives of one province of the same country to understand the speech of those of another province.

And just as dialects are decreasing so are languages becoming reduced in number. French is driving back all but one of the languages spoken on its frontiers. English is overmastering Scotch, Welsh and Irish, as it has already extinguished Cornish. In the Southern Tyrol German dialects are retreating before Italian. On the banks of the Volga the Ural-Altaic languages are disappearing before Russian; in Posen Polish yields to German; while the islets of German speech in Bohemia melt in Czech. And so the battle of speech goes on steadily, and naturally until a century hence there will probably be left very little more than four world-wide languages to fight out their battle. In Central Europe German will reign supreme, English will lord it over the North American Continent, Australasia and a large part of Africa, Spanish will dominate South America, while Russian or some such rich Slavonian dialect will blend the races of eastern Europe and central Asia into lingual harmony.

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ALL THE SAME TO HIM.

A man called upon a lawyer the other day and announced that "his rich brother had drawn up a will and died, and that—"

"Ah! I see," interrupted the lawyer; "and you want me to get it set aside? Very well, sir; we'll plead insanity."

"Oh, no—he wasn't insane. You see, the will leaves everything to—"

"To his second wife, or some charity or college. Have no fear, my dear sir. I can do the business nicely. We'll plead undue influence."

"But I influenced him myself."

"Ah! that alters the case somewhat; but I'll prove to the jury that he was afflicted with softening of the brain."

"No, pray don't do that!"

"But I must, and shall, invalidate the will."

"Then I shall have to find a lawyer who can't for it's drawn up in my favor, and I want to beat the other heirs."

"Ah! certainly. That entirely alters the case. Your brother was sane, sensible, and in perfect health, and all the lawyers in the world sha'n't set aside that will! Sit down, sir."

BLAGOVESHCHENSK CITY

ON THE BANKS OF THE AMUR RIVER.

Centre of Siberia's Gold Industry and a Place That Will Be Heard From.

It is within the limits of possibility that Blagoveschensk will play by no means an unimportant part in the war that is slowly proceeding in the far east. Directly the Russian position at Harbin becomes untenable, and apparently the object of Japan is to render it so, the Russian troops, though anxious of course to remain within easy reach of the railway, will most probably be driven across that desolate and difficult part of Manchuria where the Heihungchiang range is located, and once there the town of Blagoveschensk will be ready to receive them. In many respects it is quite an interesting town. It is built on the left bank of the Amur River. Mr. Alexander Hosié describes it as follows in his useful volume "Manchuria" (Methuen): "It is spread over a very large area, with wide streets in comparatively good repair, and contains many magnificent mercantile houses. Although red brick is now taking the place of wood, it is really a fine example of the architectural value of the latter, and one is surprised to find signboards over what in this country might readily be taken for palaces." This is exactly how it strikes the visitor, for, notwithstanding the latter limitation, the evidences of wealth are great, and architecturally the town is far in advance of either Habarovsk or Vladivostok.

RUSSIAN CARELESSNESS.

The commercial value of the place is great, seeing that it is the centre of the Siberian gold industry. Externally, the beautiful appeals to one; internally Russian carelessness is, alas! only too apparent. On a fete day you marvel at the grandeur of the illumination, but when you step inside and expect comfort, the emptiness of outward show is soon realized. Do not imagine it is a tiny place. On the contrary, its population of some 35,000, not including a garrison of nearly 6000, is spread over a very large area, and the streets of the town are beautifully wide and—for Russia—in quite good repair. Hotel accommodation here is not magnificent. Passengers on the mail steamers that arrive pretty frequently usually engage their rooms by telegraph, hence the traveler arriving by some other route will likely find "no room" in the inn. Or, what is even worse, you may be allotted a room and find in the middle of the night you have to vacate it owing to the arrival of the mail boat. Provisioning is quite a difficult task here, not from dearth of provisions, but rather from the exorbitant prices charged. Suppose some thirsty Scotch soul desired a bottle of his native reviver, he would be asked two roubles (4s. 3d.) for whisky badly made in St. Petersburg, but bearing an English label. It will thus be seen that western influence is very penetrating. French brandy costs at least 14s. 6d. a bottle, and Russian cigars—in price—beat any that may be procured at the club. Just fancy paying 16 roubles for a box of penny "smellers," and add to this a duty of nine roubles per box, and it will be clearly seen that the east end of London has a few advantages over the far east.

A TERRIBLE MASSACRE.

It is absolutely futile anybody visiting this town unless they are prepared to rough it and struggle continually with adverse circumstances. Clean water for washing purposes is rare indeed, whilst as for a bath, even the hotels do not all possess a bathroom. Notwithstanding these annoyances, there are many points of interest to be found in and near Blagoveschensk. The quaintness of the Amur at this point attracts all travelers. At some seasons of the year the river banks near the town are fully alive with cattle, and there is also a considerable movement of timber. About the end of July, 1899, a Chinese mob sallied forth from Aigun and surprised the small Cossack garrison that commanded the steamer route between the railway stations of the Stretensk and Khabartovsk. The Cossacks were panic-stricken, and rushed to the Chinese quarter of the town, surrounding the bazaars with an armed force. The defenceless inhabitants were dragged forth in batches and driven into the Amur, where some 4000 traders and coolies met their death, the river being covered with corpses. It was a terrible massacre. Russian reinforcements arrived, and thrust back the Chinese from the gates of the city, the Russians then advanced upon Aigun and reduced both the city and its inhabitants, but the memory of both massacres is alive to-day.

Employer:—"I have noticed, Mr. Timson, that you, of all the clerks, seem to put your whole life and soul into your work; that no detail is too small to escape your critical attention, no hours too long to cause you to repine." Clerk (joyfully):—"Yes, sir." Employer:—"And so, Mr. Timson, I am forced to discharge you at once. It is such chaps as you that go out and start rival establishments after they have got the whole thing down pat."

After buying experience a man seldom boasts of his bargain.