

The Free Press Short Story

THE CONTRAPTION

BY ORIN COOKER

EVERYTHING associated with the busy Milford corn cannery faded from Horace Dyer's consciousness as he read and reread the telegram he had just opened. The incessant clatter of lifting cans in the overhead carriers, the pleasant odor of cooking sweet corn, the sharp hiss of escaping steam from the direction of the huge pressure ovens—all these impressions were wiped away as the full significance of the typed words on the yellow paper in his hand came home to the young machine expert.

Sending another T. M. service Milford stop superintendent Griffith complains unusual number of machine delays stop Return as soon as new man arrives.

CANNERY EQUIPMENT CO.

Dyer needed no interpreter to explain the meaning of the abbreviation in the message. He had spent four long years in training for the work of a T. M. or trouble man. However, the four weeks he had been in Milford, serving the processing machines which the Cannery Equipment Company leased to the local concern, constituted his first season's experience in a busy plant during the packing of a field crop.

"I hope it's not bad news, Mr. Dyer." A young fellow with bandaged hand spoke.

The trouble man looked up from his telegram. "Not very good, Hanson. Recalled by the factory. Probably leaving day after tomorrow."

Barton Hanson stepped a bit nearer Dyer. "Is it because of what happened yesterday?"

The trouble man detected a seriousness in the youth's manner which he had not hitherto observed. "Only indirectly, if you have reference to your accident. It more than likely is because I aired my notions too frequently to Superintendent Griffith. He told me I should have been a preacher." The T. M. grinned broadly.

The pleasantry, however, was lost upon young Hanson. "You'll think it's none of my business, Mr. Dyer, but I wish you would tell me about

it." Again the new seriousness crept into the youth's eyes.

"There's not much to tell, Hanson. Griffith sent for me following your accident. Wanted to know if I considered you fully competent to operate a filling machine, or whether getting your hand jammed was just one of those accidents that may happen to any man who works around machinery. I should have answered yes or no, I suppose, and let it go at that. But Griffith went on to say he had several machine delays charged against you and feared you might tie up your line some day during a heavy run of corn. This led me to tell him that expecting trouble is about the most certain way to bring it to pass. I needn't have proached to him. That was my mistake. We live and learn."

Hanson's accident, because of his quick wit, had not been serious. One hand had been caught in slowly turning cog. With his other he had almost instantly thrown an emergency switch. Dyer, working near, had seized a wrench and quickly released the youth whom he then accompanied to the first-aid room.

"Here comes old Buzzard Eye," the injured operator had exclaimed, indicating the gaunt form of the approaching superintendent.

"Some difficulty here?" Griffith's words had been spoken to the trouble man, but his steel-gray eyes had accused Hanson. "Get the line operating as soon as you can, Mr. Dyer. Delays cost money when corn is coming in as rapidly as it is today."

"That man Griffith can spot trouble as quickly as a buzzard can locate a dead steer," the injured operator had observed to the T. M. as they had continued toward the first-aid room. "If a filler machine goes wrong and squirts a lot of hot corn in a fellow's face, the superintendent is at his elbow before he can get the juice wiped out of his eyes. I'd like to know how he does it. Seems like he's always looking for trouble."

From the very first, Dyer had found Griffith a difficult man to understand. Many antiquated methods that meant high operating costs were

in use about the cannery, but these, the trouble man observed, seemed to give the superintendent no concern. On the other hand, if a slight adjustment to a machine required a momentary pause in a line of processing equipment, some sixth sense seemed to warn Griffith of it immediately. Hanson's words were quite in line with Dyer's observation.

A good part of the afternoon following his receipt of the telegram, Dyer worked in a filler machine that had been taken out of the line for a thorough overhauling. The task gave him plenty of time to mull over the unpleasant situation that confronted him. Naturally, his heart rebelled at being recalled by the factory, but the injustice of Griffith's complaint wounded him even more deeply.

When the plant shut down that evening, Dyer still was unable to see any solution to his problem. He reasoned that his employer, who leased the processing units to the cannery, must respect Griffith's complaint, whether just or unjust. For business reasons alone, the machine manufacturer could not enter into an argument with the factory, but the usually it was another instance in which the customer must be satisfied.

Still, Dyer was not prepared to admit defeat. The new T. M. could not arrive short of noon of the second day following the receipt of the telegram. In that time many things might happen.

From his first day in the factory, when he had explained the operation of the filler machine to Hanson, Dyer had had a friendly interest in the young operator whom he considered far superior to most cannery workers. Their acquaintance, however, had not become intimate. Consequently the trouble man was surprised to find the young operator waiting for him when he returned to his rooming house after supper.

"I've been trying to think up a way to help you save your job," Hanson said as soon as he could steer the conversation to his topic. Dyer was impressed by the youth's earnestness.

"I hope you've turned up some ideas. I haven't. And every minute counts when a man's under sentence to be hung, you know." The trouble man spoke good-naturedly, though guardedly. Hanson's reason for being so interested in his affairs was a bit difficult to understand.

"Oh, it isn't quite as bad as if you were going to be hung, I hope. But I've felt sort of responsible ever since you told me how my accident led to Griffith's telling you that you should have been a preacher. If I hadn't been so clumsy in the first place, the accident wouldn't have happened. And if it hadn't happened, Griffith might never have complained to your factory. It isn't right for you to lose your job because of me."

"I'm not," corrected Dyer, kindly.

"I'm simply being recalled. It's what I pay for having preached too much. You mustn't take the matter to heart."

"Of course, the connection is only roundabout," Hanson admitted. "It's good of you to look at it as you do. But I thought, inasmuch as I couldn't work at my machine today, I'd see what I could dig up around the plant that might be of some help."

"And you succeeded a little?"

"Yes, a little, maybe. The man in the outside office who looks after the corn wagons all afternoon. That gave me a chance to watch Griffith's private office. He has a room still farther back into which he bohs every little while. When that clock machine went in a jam about four o'clock he hollered out of that inside room as if he'd been shot from a cannon. Do you suppose he's got some contraptions in there that keeps some contraptions on the way the different lines are working?"

"Possibly, but I can't see how such a thing would help in any way to save my job. Another T. M. already is on the way. The noose dangles."

"Cut out the noose, please. I feel bad enough about your job as it is. It seemed to me that if you knew Griffith's contraption, you might be able to figure out the information to advantage. Maybe you haven't learned that the cannery's owned by Eastern capital and the bank here is acting as trustee. The plant's lost so much money that Griffith's only hanging to his own job by his eyelids."

"How do you know so much about this concern?" Machine operators usually don't have any interest in such matters," Dyer, scrutinizing the youth closely, thought he observed a slight embarrassment in the young fellow's reply.

"Oh, I've just kept my ears open. Thought maybe you didn't know the lay of things. I could tell you even more. You'd be interested to know Griffith's temper with my machine. Several times since the pack opened, no one else would want to frame me except him. I go over my machine every morning to be sure no bolts are loose or missing."

"Honest?"

"Honest true, Mr. Dyer. And sometimes I find what I'm looking for. The trouble man's interest was now thoroughly aroused.

"Perhaps you won't believe me," Hanson continued, "but Griffith's working to build up a case against me that will have weight with the bank. You see, I was taken on here because President Merritt asked Griffith to make room for me. If he can show that I'm not competent to operate a machine, he'll have reason to feel Mr. Merritt couldn't object to my being let off. I believe Griffith is going to feel easy until he finds a way to put this affair at the bank. He's more than half afraid I'm a spotter sent here by the owner."

"You've told me a lot of interesting things. I want to sleep on what you've said, or rather I want to stay awake over them and piece every thing together. It's a real jigsaw puzzle your case and mine. Sort of fits together. Now you can along and let me figure out how to get you into my office sometime early tomorrow."

Dyer spent considerable time checking through what Hanson had told him. Then he rummaged in his trunk for certain papers which he had, his plan had been fully completed in one particular. Of this he studied carefully. When he went to work the next morning he found the cannery in the morning.

His arrival there was an hour earlier than usual. He wanted to go over the several lines of processing equipment most minutely. His features hardened as he worked from one machine to another. His square chin protruded, a habit with him when his fighting blood was aroused. Later, as Hanson appeared, the trouble man almost growled at him.

"Here, Hanson. I want you to come along while I make an official call on Mr. Griffith. You won't have to mix in. I want you with me in case I might need a witness."

Together they went to the superintendent's office where the latter was found at his desk.

"Mr. Griffith, I come to make a demand. Until the new service man arrives I am the representative here of the Cannery Equipment Company. The directions given me at the time of my assignment clothed with full power over the equipment which our concern leases to the cannery only for use under our own supervision. In your lease of this equipment you will find the provision that you are forbidden to tamper with, change, modify, or otherwise alter our installation, under penalty of immediate revocation of your lease. You have violated that provision. Therefore, I demand that you close down each processing line at once."

Mr. Griffith's face became almost purple as he realized the import of Dyer's demand.

"You young upstart, how dare you come in here and make such demands! What has occurred that you should threaten me like this?"

"You have only to open that door over there to find the answer to your own question."

"But if I refuse?"

"Then a sworn statement of my findings goes forward to the factory by air mail. The cannery Equipment Company always has insisted that its

machines be left absolutely as they are installed. Otherwise, it cannot guarantee their proper operation. You have connected a lethal device of some sort to each line of equipment. The wires lead to that room. This is an absolute violation of the contract. The factory is very particular about all such matters. I demand that our machines be closed down at once."

"Why, Mr. Dyer, that would ruin us! We are at the peak of the pack and will be for several days more. Corn never was better—no more plentiful. I won't listen to you. Those machines aren't going to be closed down. Even if you call in the law I'll have this cannery operating again in an hour. You can't bully-rig me like this. The superintendent struck his desk a resounding whack with his fist. "I refuse to close down those machines."

To Dyer's surprise, Hanson suddenly spoke. "I've been in your office. The trouble man would have warned him back, but it was too late.

"Let me suggest a way to adjust this matter, Mr. Griffith."

"Young fellow, what right have you to intrude? Get yourself out of here instantly. This matter is for Dyer and me to settle. Maybe his factory has the right to close down its machines, but if it does."

Hanson walked until Griffith's passion had partly spent itself. Then he leaned toward him over the desk.

"This matter is not simply between you and Mr. Dyer. It's between you and me. I am the 'Eastern capital' that owns this cannery. I am the one for whom you've mismanaged it. This cannery was left to me, and accordingly to my father's will, I was to assume control when I became of age. That came to pass about the time Mr. Merritt asked you to find a place for me. Mr. Dyer probably has a right to order the machines closed down. But he isn't going to insist on it. We're going to finish this pack. You are not discharged, Mr. Griffith, but your salary will cease the moment the last can of corn is packed. The key, please, in that locked door."

Dyer, deeply moved at the sudden turn in affairs, recognized Hanson's mastery and decisive stroke. Griffith admitted defeat as was evident by his handing over his keys without further protest. Hanson opened the locked room. A row of diminutive electric globes twinkled from a small rack upon a table.

"There's the contraption, Mr. Dyer. Pretty simple, isn't it? Perhaps you'll explain how it works."

"It's just an ordinary telltale device," replied the T. M. "Every time an empty can slips out of the overhead carrier on its way to the filler machine it completes a circuit and flashes one of the bulbs. The constant passing of cans is what gives the effect of twinkling. When a line closes down for any reason the cans stop moving. Consequently the signal lights cease to flash on and off. Simple, isn't it?"

Three Million Czechs Work for Freedom

(By G. Herbert)

Mr. Jan Masarik, the Foreign Minister of Czechoslovakia, has described his country as "a nation without quinquins" a proud boast, but one which is fully justified.

Although Czechoslovakia has been under Nazi rule longer than any other country (Austria of course excepted) the opposition to the German authorities is stronger than ever today.

To understand what this means it must be realized that during the past twenty-seven months tens of thousands of Czechs have passed through the Gestapo torture chambers; thousands have been executed or tortured to death. The ancient castle of Spilberg in Brno holds hundreds of Czech patriots in its mazelike dungeons.

It is believed that there are now something like three million patriots working in the cause of freedom within the frontiers of what was Czechoslovakia, yet in 1938 the total population including Germans and Slovaks and Ruthenes was only 15,000,000.

Attempting to strangle the fierce spirit of the Czechs, the Nazis disbanded the Legions. The Legionaries, veterans of the great fighting which the Czechs made across Russia in the cause of the Great War, were thrown into concentration camps. More recently the Sokol organization was broken up, its property confiscated, and its leaders sent to join the legionaries in prison faced by this sadistic oppression, the Czechs resorted to the traditional methods of underground warfare which had broken the Teuton before.

In a recent article published in the Prague German paper, Der Neue Tag (The New Day), the writer complained that even the Czech cows yield less milk than German cows.

Everywhere agricultural production is dwindling, stock disappearing, the land yields only enough for the farmer's basic needs, not one turnip more.

The Czechs know well enough that the appetite of the Nazi pillagers is insatiable.

CUTTING DAIRY HERDS

LONDON, (CP) Because of fodder shortage, 170,000 cows will be culled from dairy herds in Britain this year, representing a reduction of five per cent. in the nation's dairy herds.

ACTON FALL FAIR
September 16th and 17th

SPECIAL PRIZES

- 18 Best High Stepping Horse, \$5.00 Cash; 2nd by Savage & Co., Guelph, Goods to value of \$3.00
- 24 Best Single Turnout, 1st, one year's subscription, Guelph Daily Mercury, value \$4.00; 2nd, Walker Stores, Guelph, and value \$2.00
- 38 Best Span High Steppers in Harness, 1st, Cash \$5.00; 2nd Cash \$3.00
- 48 Best Span Heavy Horses, any breed, 1st, \$7.00; 2nd, 12.00
- 58 Best Lady Rider; 1st by Acker Furlong Co., Goods value \$3.50; 2nd by Chapple's Book Store, Wallpaper value \$2.00
- 68 Best Lady Driver; 1st, by Weston Broad and Coko Co., Bread Tickets value \$5.00; 2nd by Guelph Home Furnishing Co., goods value \$2.00
- 78 Best Saddle Horse, any breed, suitable for hunter, 1st, Daymond Furnishing Co., Guelph, goods value \$5.00; 2nd by Dominion Home Furnishing Co., Guelph, goods value \$3.00
- 88 Best Heavy Horse on grounds, Mare or Gelding any breed, 1st, \$5.00; 2nd, \$3.00 cash
- 98 Best Pony, 12 hands and under, hitched to suitable vehicle, 1st, by Georgetown Lumber Co., goods, value \$2.50; 2nd, by J. D. McArthur, goods value \$2.00
- 108 Best Single Delivery Horse, 1st, \$3.00; 2nd, \$2.00, by Acton Creamery
- 118 Best Showmanship of Pony, open to boy or girl, 1st, hnm value \$4.00 by Jas. Murray, 2nd, goods value \$3.00 by Anderson's Book Store, Guelph

CATTLE SPECIALS

- 128 Best Jersey, get of sire, group of three animals either sex, bred by exhibitor from Hinton County, Erin or Erasmus Townships. Any family having won a T. Eaton Co., Limited, prize in this class at a Fair in 1941, not eligible to compete, by T. Eaton Co., Limited, Silver Meat Platter, Sheffield reproduction, value 18.00
- 138 Best Beef Steer or Heifer, 1st and exhibited by the owner, Cash \$5.00
- 148 Best Dairy Cow, any age, by Charles Barber, Guelph, goods to value of \$1.50
- 158 Best Three Calves, Cash, \$2.50
- 168 Junior Heifer, any breed, consisting of bull and 3 females, previously shown in individual classes, all under two years of age, by the Hinton Union Mutual Fire Insurance Co., 1st, 3 fire extinguishers, value \$1.00 each; 2nd, two fire extinguishers, value \$1.00 each

HOG SPECIALS

- 178 Best Pair Young Sows, under 4 months, 1st, 2 bags Pioneer Pig Starter, by Western Canada Flour Mills, per A. Kerr, dealer, value \$5.00
- 188 Best Bacon Hog, 200 lb. Sur-Gain 41% Hog Concentrate, value \$6.50, by Canada Packers, per A. Kerr, dealer

SHEEP SPECIALS

- 198 Best Flock of Sheep, consisting of 1 ram, 2 ewes and 2 ewe lambs, any breed, by Canada Bread Co., 1st, tickets, value \$3.00
- 208 Best Pair Marketable Wether Lambs, cash \$2.50; 2nd, McDonald's Bakery, bread tickets, value \$4.50

GRAIN, ROOT AND VEGETABLE SPECIALS

- 218 Best Collection of Farm Produce, including grain, roots, vegetables, fruit and flowers. Gardeners not eligible. 1st, by Holt, Stimpson Co., Ltd., Silver Meat Platter in well and free design, value \$7.00; 2nd, by Cole Bros., goods to value of \$2.00
- 228 Best Six Our Ideal Mangolds, 1st, Ontario Seed Co., seeds to be collected spring of 1941, Woodhall & Muscotte, value \$2.00; 2nd, by Acton Home Bakery, bread tickets, value \$1.85
- 238 Best Three Samples of Grain, consisting of wheat, oats and barley, half bushel of each, 1st, by Nicol's Economy Store, hat, value \$2.00; 2nd, by Family Herald and Weekly Star, subscription, \$1.00
- 248 Best Bushel Basket of Mixed Vegetables. Not open to market gardeners. By Woodhall & Muscotte, plants, spring of 1941, 1st, value \$2.00; 2nd, value \$1.00
- 258 Best Bushel-Shopping Turnips, 1st, cash, \$2.00; 2nd, cash, \$1.00

HOME DEPARTMENT SPECIALS

- 268 Best Dozen Tea Biscuits, baked from Lily White Flour, by Hartley's Mill, Exeter, 1st, 50 lb. Lily White Flour, 2nd, 25 lb. Lily White Flour, value \$2.25
- 278 Best Loaf Home-made Bread, made from Purty Flour. Donor to receive same. Entries must have sales slip for flour two weeks prior to Fair showing it purchased from D. H. Landis, First, 98 lb. Purty Flour, value \$2.50; 2nd, 49 lb. High Loaf Flour, value \$1.75; 3rd, 24 lb. Purty Flour, value \$1.00
- 288 Best Dozen Tea Biscuits, baked from Excelsior Flour, by D. H. Landis, 1st, 50 lb. Excelsior flour, value \$1.20; 2nd, 25 lb. Excelsior flour, value \$1.00
- 298 Best Loaf Home-made Bread made from High Loaf Flour. Donor to receive same. Entries must have sales slip for flour two weeks prior to Fair, showing it purchased from D. H. Landis, 98 lb. High Loaf Flour, value \$2.50; 2nd, 49 lb. High Loaf Flour, value \$1.75; 3rd, 24 lb. Purty Flour, value \$1.00
- 308 Best Collection of Baking, made by any lady living on a farm near Acton, by Fallant's Clothing Store, goods, value 1.00

PLANTS AND FLOWER SPECIALS

- 318 Best Basket of Gladioli, not less than 25 in bloom, 1st, Daymond Motors, Guelph, goods value \$2.00; 2nd, cash, 75c
- 328 Best Basket Cut Flowers, 1st, cash, \$1.00; 2nd, cash, 50c
- 338 Cent. Pines of Assorted Flowers, on tray, for dinner table setting, 2 weeks, 1st, by Zellers Ltd., goods value \$2.00; 2nd, cash, 75c
- 348 Best Basket Wild Flowers, arranged for effect, 1st, by Budds Dept. Store, goods value \$2.00; 2nd, cash, 50c
- 358 Best Patriotic Display of Red, White and Blue Flowers, 1st, by Spars Bros., goods value \$2.00; 2nd, cash, 50c
- 368 Largest and Best Head of Sunflowers, by Wm. Gowdy, cash

MISCELLANEOUS

- 378 Best Collection of Ladies Fancy Work, not more than 15 pieces, not exhibited before, 1st, cash \$1.00; 2nd, by Gordon Mackay Ltd. per Elliott Bros. Acton, box of full fashioned hose, value \$3.00
- 388 Best Collection of Cushions, new and up-to-date, by John Armstrong, goods value 2.00
- 398 Best Baby's Lavette, under one year, by Alder's Dept. Store, goods value 2.00
- 408 Best exhibit of Red Cross Knitting by Lakeside Chapter I.O.G.E. 1st, cash \$1.25; 2nd, cash 75c
- 418 To Couple married greatest number of years, attending the Fair. Registration to be made with gatekeepers of Secretary second day of Fair. The Acton Free Press, one year, value 2.00
- 428 To the Person attending Acton Fair from the Greatest Distance. Report to Secretary for computation of distance. The Acton Free Press, one year, value 2.00
- 438 Best Appearing Child, under 12 years, and Doll Carriage, in School Parade, 1st, by Kresge & Co., goods value \$2.00; 2nd, cash, \$1.00; 3rd, cash, 50c
- 448 Best Decorated Bicycle, in School Parade, boys or girls, 1st, by La Voque, Guelph, \$1.00; 2nd, cash, \$1.00; 3rd, cash, \$1.00
- 458 Best Stamp Collection of First Day Covers, by A. T. Brown, 1st, stamps, value \$1.25; 2nd, stamps value 75c
- 468 Best exhibit of war posters, arrangement to count, open to boys and girls under 16 years of age, 1st, cash \$1.00; 2nd, cash 50c
- 478 Best Collection of Baking, 3 varieties, by girl under 14 years of age, 1st 75c cash, 2nd 50c cash
- 488 Best Relief Map of the Dominion of Canada showing the provinces by boy or girl under 14 years; 1st 25c; 2nd 50c cash

AN INVALUABLE SERVICE

It is doubtful if in any other line of business the man of the retail end renders so technically expert and helpful service to his customers at so low a cost as does the local Implement Dealer. This, while it has always been so, has greater significance in these days of more highly mechanized farming, calling as it does for training and experience in the servicing of modern machines.

His experience with machines enables him to give time and money-saving service in the speedy furnishing of the correct part when repairs and replacements are required—for delays in seeding, haying and harvesting may result in substantial loss to a farmer. In those critical seasons his warehouse is open practically at all times, and he is untiring in playing his part to prevent farmers suffering from delays.

His accumulated knowledge of methods being used and of the experiences of the many farmers he calls on and associates with makes his advice helpful and valuable.

Since the early pioneering days, through all the vicissitudes of farming, the Implement Dealer has shared the hardships as well as the fortunes of farmers rendering a worth-while service and establishing a well-founded place for himself in our economic set-up.

MASSEY-HARRIS COMPANY LIMITED
A DIVISION OF THE CANADIAN FARM