

keenly. When he was gone, Tom glanced across the desk.

"Don't you think yourself that Eddie's job is rather too big for him? The works have grown past him. Why, if he'd come to us as he is, hunting a job, we wouldn't hire him as a common laborer. He's not equal to a real day's work, let alone directing the work of thirty-five men under him. And there are Gladstone and Carey in the woodworking shops, and Stark in the machine shop, and Bates—"

Sam stopped him with an inarticulate syllable, deep in his thick throat:

"Aghr! Wait, now! I know! There's no need to go round and round with that. I know! Come right down to cases with me. If the business was yours, would you be firin' old Eddie?"

Tom could be as straightforward as his father.

"I'd have him quit on a pension—him and the others."

"Pension!" Sam bit the word off short, then spat deliberately. "Pension! Pension old Eddie?" He gave a short laugh of grim, sardonic humor. "I'd a heap rather you'd be the one to tell old Eddie about it than me."

Suddenly his temper burst beyond all bounds.

"Hell's bells, Tom! You don't know what you're sayin'. You don't know who old Eddie is. Let me tell you somethin'. Away back there in the little shop, Eddie was one that swung a hammer with me on that first decent job. I owed him six weeks' pay when I got that contract. Eddie knew as well as I did that it was a toss-up before that whether he ever got his money. Then's when he could have quit me if he'd been one of the quit-tin' kind. He didn't. He stuck. He'd work all day with me, and then he'd come down and worry with me half the night, tryin' to figure things out. Me talk to old Eddie about pensionin' him? Old Eddie stays right where he is, long as he can stand on his feet. Mebbe efficiency ain't a word that belonged to my time, but gratitude did."

"I know you're fond of him," Tom began.

Sam picked up the word hotly.

"Fond of him? You're not sayin' it at all. I love him! It's his looks you're mindin' now. He ain't much for looks. But he was a good-looker in his day. Do you know what makes him look the way he does now? It's because the life of him has gone into the works—the life of him as much as mine."

TOM was not a man whose will could relinquish easily. He had known that his part would be difficult.

"I know, dad. Just the same, the business has grown beyond him. To keep responsibility in the hands of men like Eddie is like cutting down our power enormously. If there was an engine in the shops that leaked half its steam out of its cylinders, you'd be the first to want it fixed. Well, we're wasting a lot of steam through leaks like old Eddie. It's the business I'm thinking about. If the business is going ahead, we can't let it be hindered by our human fondnesses."

"Hindered!" The word struck upon Sam's memory with a sense of sharp dismay. "Hindered!"

His wife had spoken to him of hindering. He got out of his chair and marched heavily back and forth across the room.

"Hindering! Good Lord, has it got as far as that? Have I been doin' somethin' I didn't know about? Have I got the works built so big that I can't be human in 'em any more? And I've fixed up a house I can't hardly be human in; and I've got my folks up to where bein' plain human ain't enough to suit 'em. What kind of a mess is it I've been makin'?"



"Molly, Molly! You've lived that down, somehow. I haven't. I've kept right on loving the old way."

Had he known, the Rev. P. Martyne Fosdyke would not have been likely to choose that moment for his call upon Sam. In any moment Sam would have felt dislike for Fosdyke's smug air, for his artificial smile, for his small eyes set close together, and for his purring voice. Now Sam detested him at sight.

"Ah-h, Brother Webster?" Fosdyke gave Sam a card.

The old man glanced at it; then stood scowling, waiting.

"I shall not occupy much of your time," Fosdyke said. "Your good lady, Brother Webster, has subscribed generously to the fund for a working girls' home to be established in Sharpston. Thus far I have visited only a few of those whose names would lend prestige. To-night there is to be a public meeting. If I might have in hand, Brother Webster, the actual checks to cover those first subscriptions, to be exhibited at the meeting, the psychological effect—"

Old Sam was very blunt.

"Why did you come to Sharpston to start your home?"

"Ah-h!" Fosdyke's voice was velvet smooth, but his eyes were alert. "The Lord's vineyard, brother, is wide."

Sam grunted. "But the pickin' is better some places than others. And women are easier pickin' than men. I didn't see any men's names in your list in the paper. This five hundred of mine, now— If you got it, how much of it would be your rake-off?"

"Rake-off?"

Fosdyke's voice was at its smoothest, his eyes at their keenest.

"Yes," Sam growled. "How much would you pinch off for yourself?"

"Well, really!" Fosdyke purred. "That is rather a forceful way of putting it. The laborer, you know, is worthy of his hire—"

Old Sam tore Fosdyke's card in two and dropped the pieces.

"You don't get a cent of my money till there are some men backin' your scheme—good men, men I know; and then my money's goin' through the hands of an auditin' committee. You needn't come back till that can be done."

He turned abruptly to his desk. For a time he fumbled blindly with his papers, picking them up, slamming them down again, not knowing what they were. Presently, with a formless oath, he put on his hat and went out.

AT home, he went stamping impatiently from room to room through the big house, hunting his wife. He found his two daughters idling over a late breakfast. He did not linger with them. Not many words had passed lately between father and daughters, whose ways were not his ways. He persisted in his search till he came upon his wife in her sitting-room, engaged with a stenographer who visited her thrice a week. Sam spoke almost harshly:

"Molly, let the girl go. I want to talk to you."

He paced the floor till the stenographer had gone, and his wife had come to him, concerned. She was not used to seeing him like this.

"Sam, what is it?" she asked.

Sam tried to laugh, but made a sorry failure of it.

"Nothing. Everything! There's nothin' wrong; but everything's gone wrong somehow. Things have come to where

I've got to talk 'em out with you. Business is all right; it's our life I'm meanin'. It's been on my mind a sight, but I've been keepin' my mouth shut about it. I could keep right on keepin' it shut if I was willin' to let things go. But I ain't goin' to do it. It's somethin' that's got to be worked out, and I can't work it out alone. Nobody could. It's got to be between you and me—both of us."

He took up his restless pacing, while she watched him, wondering. Until to-day it was long since their talk had gone beyond the commonplaces; it was long since Sam had shown anything more than a half stolid, half whimsical interest in the life of his family. Now he was genuinely troubled.

"Listen to me, Molly," he said. "I turned down your Fosdyke person this mornin'. I did it on purpose. I told him he couldn't have his money, and I'm not goin' to give it to him. I ain't goin' to give away any more money like that, so as to get it printed in the paper and talked about. And there's some other things I ain't goin' to do any more, either."

HE halted before her, a stern, implacable figure, his eyes relentless.

"You know what you said to me at breakfast—about me hinderin'. Well, I got that same thing from Tom at the office. He's wantin' me to fire Eddie Brady, and Carey, and the rest of them old-timers. He says it's hinderin' the business to keep 'em. I've had that notion dished up to me twice to-day. It don't suit me. You as good as told me I'm hinderin' by wantin' to be just plain, old-fashioned friendly with folks; and Tom told me I'm hinderin' by wantin' to stay human at the works. It ain't goin' to do, Molly."

He checked himself, and his thoughts took a sharp turn.

"Say, I can't talk to you the way I want to here. I'll be quarrelin' with you in a minute, like as not. I ain't ever got used to you in these rooms, with all these fixin's. Say, how long is it since you've been up to my room?"

She smiled vaguely, a little uneasily.

"Why, Sam, it's—it's quite a while. I don't get up to the third floor. I supposed there was nothing I could do—"

"Well, come on; let's go up there now," he suggested. "I can't feel right here. I can say what I mean up there. Come along."

The upper floor of the big house was as another domain. Sam had insisted upon keeping it so. Bits of rag carpeting lay in the halls; clean white paint covered the woodwork; homely plainness was everywhere. Homely plainness found its fullest expression in Sam's own room, with its low, sloping ceiling and its jutting dormer windows looking out over the tree-tops in yard and street. A worn rag carpet was there, too, and worn arm-chairs, and a wide, old-fashioned bedstead of black walnut. The walls held a few shabbily framed pictures of a style long past—a chromo of a Mother and Child, an impossible bit of blue and green and white mountain scenery, and a pair of setter dogs at work in a stubble-field, with gay-coated huntsmen in the background. Odds and ends were scattered about in disarray; yet each seemed, somehow, to have fallen into its fit place.

Clumsily Sam placed a chair.

"Set down," he said, and seated himself opposite. "This is more like. If you had on a different frock you'd look mighty natural in that chair. It's quite a spell since you've set in it, ain't it? Not since you got done with nursin' Katie. That's sixteen year in the spring. Remember when we got it?"

She stirred, looking down at the faded upholstery. Sam laughed softly.

"Sure you do! Bill Carey made the speech when they give it to you. It wasn't any great shakes for a speech; I guess he'd never made one in his life before. But a body could tell what he was meanin'. That was the Christmas I had five men in the shop. They bought that chair on tick and paid for it a little piece at a time. I'm keepin' it. I'm keepin' several things. Take a look around.