

LET US BE KIND TO EACH OTHER.

We are basking to-day in prosperity's smile...

If we're more than enough let us give from our store...

Let us cultivate love, put all hatreds away...

A PLEA.

Dear Santa Claus, I've got to go to bed...

I want a pair of skates, a knife, a pony that can trot...

I want a kite, with miles of string, and several Christmas trees...

MR. RUTHVEN'S BLACK-LIST.

BY OCTAVE THANET.

The superintendent had written him that the strike was broken...

David Ruthven had not made a fortune before he was forty...

"So you think the strikers are sick of it, do you?" said he, smoothing his mustache...

"Dead-sick," said the superintendent.

"Do you think there is much actual suffering here?"

"I don't think there is much starving or freezing...

While he spoke the superintendent smiled in an embarrassed way...

"I used to live on a meal a day once about Christmas time..."

"Well, all I ask is to keep out of debt," said one man...

"They are the only ones, then," said a red-faced man...

"All the same I see you coming out of Jerry's place yesterday..."

"Perhaps they'll come back. I hope so," said the superintendent.

"Hardly," said Ruthven. "These fellows think they can strike and put me in a hole..."

"I know they're abusive," the superintendent began...

"I don't care a rap for that; I'd have been flayed about as badly if I ran for Congress..."

"Yes," said Finnerty, slipping his big hand into the man's arm...

"I won't take your chicken, then," cried the man...

"Them Finnertys do be charitable people," one of the by-standers observed...

Ruthven waited, chained to the spot by an attraction stronger than he had ever felt in any theatre...

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them to declare the strike off now and take their chances with you—

"But he's the chairman; it's Anthony Davis, isn't it? He must know he can't get back."

"He don't expect it, sir. He's sent his wife home to her folks, and he is going to go in search of a job as soon as the strike is over..."

"He'll have the better chance of a job, then," said Ruthven, rising and shrugging himself into this great-coat.

"There were two or three of the committee, particularly Finnerty and Vestry. I know, didn't approve of the strike."

"Why did they give in, then? It's no use, Barclay—it's settled."

"Yes, sir," said Barclay, mildly. But in a second, as Ruthven reached the door, he ventured, "If you knew the men as I have learned to know them, sir—"

"That wouldn't make any difference. Good-by; I'm going to see the town a little by myself."

Barclay looked after him, a slim, erect figure, walking with the firm, light step of a young man, and he sighed.

"Confound it! I didn't do a bit of good," said he; "maybe made him madder!"

There were no traces of anger, however, on the president's countenance as he moved down the street.

Zoar was not a familiar town to him. The factory was newly established—barely two years old; and Ruthven's knowledge of the place was no more than could be gleaned in walks from the station to the shops and from the shops back to the station.

He looked about with a degree of fresh interest, deciding the town to have a grim look, with its leafless maples, and its raw hillsides sliced down to the level of the streets.

Factory chimneys bristled on the river bank. The smoke volleyed out of the near ones; but down to the left was a dimly clean group, above which the brilliant western sun had not a stain—his own. He had taken the main street, the principal business channel of the town.

Was it his fancy that the little shops were not so gay as in former years? There was the customary Christmas garbure in the windows; the mistletoe and holly trimmings, and the grotesque figures of the good old saint; but there seemed more frowns and fewer turkeys sprawling still yellow legs in the grocers' windows; the toys were cheaper, though they made a brave display, and the butcher shops did not crowd the sidewalks as he remembered.

There was, too, an abnormal look about the streets; they were too full of men for the hour. Neither did the men look cheerful, as befitted the season. They drifted aimlessly through the streets, their hands in their pockets, and their shoulders under their thin coats hunched with the chill.

There was no snow on the ground—in its place a stiffening black mud that made the shoes of the dreary crowd shapeless and ugly, and drabbed the sidewalks and the floors of the stores.

And Ruthven noticed that the people did not stumble under a cheerful burden of bundles, but carried very few. The men looked sullen, and the women's faces were sharp and anxious.

They chafed the toys and fruits in shrill voices, complaining incessantly of the hard times.

Ruthven found himself listening to one colloquy, himself sheltered by a great fir tree:

"Well, all I ask is to keep out of debt," said one man; "it's terrible to be in debt. I don't owe anything, but I'm on my last five dollars. I spent two of it, too. My wife says, let the children have a good time!"

"They are the only ones, then," said a red-faced man interrupted, violently, "and not all them; I got four to my house, and not a bite for them tomorrow."

"All the same I see you coming out of Jerry's place yesterday," a woman who stood close to the first speaker struck in, "and 'twas past walking decent you was!"

"I got me drunk for nothin', then; so what harm did it do the children?" the man demanded, sulkily. "Ye know well, Mrs. Finnerty, I'd wint without me beer if I couldn't git it on credit!"

"And that's so, too," the woman agreed, mollified; "but don't git so down-hearted, and don't try to cheer up with whiskey, if it is free, for it will be leaving the headache for you, and the headache for your wife the next morning; and they're free too, God knows! Say, Michael, you come with Finnerty and me; come home! We've a chicken more'n we want, and Tony's left ye some potatoes and onions. I see him. Come home!"

"Yes," said Finnerty, slipping his big hand into the man's arm; "she's right—come home."

"I won't take your chicken, then," cried the man, but he choked in the middle of his denials, and rubbed his sleeve over his eyes. And they led him away.

"Them Finnertys do be charitable people," one of the by-standers observed to another, "and it ain't much they got themselves by now, I'm thinking."

"That's so," said the other.

Ruthven waited, chained to the spot by an attraction stronger than he had ever felt in any theatre. Presently all

the people went, except a man and a woman. He was a big fellow, with a clean-shaven square jaw that contrasted the mildness of his gray eye.

His clothes were patched and shabby. She was neatly dressed and a comely woman, and she looked tired and thin.

When they drew Ruthven's attention she was counting over some nickles in the palm of her hand. "Twenty for the butter, and five for candy"—Ruthven could make out of the words distinctly—"Jim don't you think we could do just as well with fifteen cents' worth of candy? It'll be all we can do for the children!"

The man seemed to agree, and they entered the store together, Ruthven following. Not for the first time that afternoon he wished that he could give something, but he did not dare. He did manage in this case to have a private word with the grocer's clerk, which resulted in an astonishingly bountiful measure and some oranges for the children.

"We're going to give oranges to the kids to-day," said the clerk, with a broad smile. So they were, after that visit of Ruthven's.

He took a vast interest in the amiable stratagem, and reported to Ruthven (whom he did not recognize) confidentially, over the candy-barrel:

"Yes, they were pretty glad to buy a little on credit—all only come to eighty-five cents; there's the memorandum. When they pay up, I'll send it in stamps to you. I wouldn't ask for the case if I was sure the man would git back. Name's Vesey, and I know him. Honest, sober man, and if he only gets back he'll pay every cent inside of three months."

"I guess he'll get back," said Ruthven. "And Finnerty, too." But the latter sentence was not said aloud.

"Fraid not," muttered the grocer's clerk; "he's on the committee. Say, will you give me your address, so's I can return that money?"

"Oh, I'll be back," the grocer answered, carelessly, as he left the store. He walked for an hour. He listened in butchers' shops and in bakers', hearing plenty of blunt criticism of himself, but more broken ends of tales of suffering and patience and the poor helping the poor, as they always have helped. He heard more than one of his former men asking that things might be "charged," with a choke in his voice, and the cringe of a horse expecting a blow in his eyes.

"Heard tell you'd shut down on credit," said a man, sauntering up to a butcher's block with an elaborately careless swagger.

"Well, you got it straight," the butcher stopped wishing to answer. "I'm as sorry's the next one for the boys; but I can't help 'em by falling, and that's what'll happen if I can't pay myself."

"That's right," said the man, absently drawing figures on the greasy slab with his thumb nail; "but—say, you ain't got no job of cutting wood or—anything that you'd let mighty low for a roast of pork to-morrow?"

"I'm sorry," said the butcher, "but I ain't."

"Well, good-afternoon, then," said the man; "jest thought I'd ask you, that's all." And he slouched out of the door.

In the street Ruthven saw him standing, his hands in his pockets, looking drearily about him, as if he were trying to think where he could apply next.

He roused himself with an effort. "It does make a difference knowing the men," he muttered; "but why, why will they let themselves be fooled by these Cheap Jacks of labor leaders?"

With that he went off rapidly towards a livery-stable, where in the haste that money can always command, he was given a dazzling new buggy and a big black horse.

For more than an hour he drove rapidly through the country roads about the town, his thoughts climbing an obscure and rugged path to a new point of view. The strike orators were wont to arraign Ruthven as a "cold-blooded aristocrat." He was neither an aristocrat nor cold-blooded. Like many very rich men, he hated ostentation, and kept the simple tastes of his youth; and he had a secret, carefully guarded, self-willed warmth of heart, often impelling him to erratic and expansive bits of kindness. The ice in his relations with his men came not from his temperament, but from his ignorance that circumstances had inflicted on him. He had risen from the ranks, but it was in the office and not at the bench. He had none of that intimate sympathy which the working-man's comrade acquires as unconscious as he acquires his hard hands.

Ruthven treated his workmen precisely as he treated any men of whom he bought goods. He bought labor as he bought wood or iron, at the best bargain he could make, but willing to pay the highest price for the best article. To pay wages promptly and to keep his word comprised the whole duty of an employer, to his thinking. He could not afford to pay the wages demanded by the men, so he let them strike, and viewed the defeat that he had foreseen with a little tingle of com-

placency. "I'll rub it into those fellows," he said to himself on the train; "they won't strike on me again in a hurry." But after his few hours of mingling with the men he was not so sure of his own mind; the working-man as a husband and father and neighbor was so different from the working-man as a striker.

The burden of his thoughts slipped out in a single sentence, uttered as he turned into his horse's head: "Yes, Barclay knows them better than I; I guess the central committee will make enough examples!"

He was on one of the bleak hillsides near the factory district. The highway ran along the top of the hill; below were the river filled with floating ice and the marsh streaked by sleek black pools of ice, and overgrown with reddish-brown underbrush, like rust on a knife blade. Lean shadows of trees into the larger and darker shadows of the hills.

The electric lights had sprung up, and glared whitely over patches of the road, and red lamps were lighted in the small houses among the hills. Ruthven had none too much time to return and catch his train.

But on the heels of this thought there rose a din of mingled rage and supplication from the ravine. Only one word, amid howls and curses, was distinct; that word was "Scab," and it was strong enough to get Ruthven out of the buggy and over the hill in an instant.

Four men were pelting him with a writhing and yelling heap on the ground. At Ruthven's shout the face from which the blood was streaming, and begged: "Oh, don't kill me, boys; I got six children—my wife, she is sick—oh, don't! oh, don't!"

"I'll blow your brains out, the whole crowd of you, if you hit him again!" roared Ruthven; and then slipped on an unseen patch of ice among the weeds and literally rolled down on them. He got on to his knees; he did not try to rise further, for an ugly pain stabbed his ankle, and he knew better than to test it; but, cool as ever, he glanced along the shining barrel of his revolver.

The other men—they were really boys—fell back; but the leader, screaming, "I don't care a— for your pop!" made a savage rush. Ruthven's finger was on the trigger, yet he held his fire, for at this moment another man plunged down the hill and fell upon the boys, hitting right and left, and using his heels with as much agility and vigor as his fists. The fury of his onslaught more than his blows sent them scattering. Then he ran nimbly to Ruthven's assailant, whom he clutched by the collar, crying, "Don't you fire, mister!" and in the same breath, addressing the man, "Thank me and the Lord for saving your life, Tom Brady; and more shame to you being in such a mess."

"That's Ruthven," said the other sullenly, but making no attempt at resistance; "I want to lick him!"

The new-comer turned on Ruthven a perfectly calm, rather surprised, but not in the least abashed stare. His brows met heavily, and he looked back contemptuously at the speaker.

"Drinking again?" said he, "and you with the making of such a man in you! You ought to go home and kick yourself."

"I ain't drunk, and I'm going to lick 'em!" retorted the inter-fereer, whom, for some reason—certainly not his size, since he was a slim man and rather short—the other seemed to regard with respect under all his bravado.

"You ain't dead gutter-drunk, but you ain't sober, or you could see you haven't a show; he's shot you dead before you can hit him a clip, you fool!"

"Let him; I wish he would!"

"And you've been doing up Lars Larson, too," continued the reprover.

"He was scabbing," began the man, "and what if he was? you ain't no call to interfere and hit him! I told you this strike would be lost if you did that way! Say"—addressing Ruthven—"what's the matter with you?"

He spoke with respect, but it was the respect of a working man, which has not many outward forms, not of the personal servile to which Ruthven was accustomed. Ruthven himself, however, was feeling red hot pinners in his ankle, and his only desire now was to get back to the office and his train.

"I guess you'll have to let me help you," said the man; "you look as if you'd sprained your ankle. Here, Lars, you can't find them teeth; quit hunting for them, and help Mr. Ruthven up."

"Maybe they'll grow again; I could find 'em," begged Lars, indistinctly, still groping; but on a second call he rose, and helped the speaker lift Ruthven to his feet.

"Only get me back to my buggy and I shall be all right," said Ruthven. He pulled out his purse.

"I don't want your money," said the little man roughly. "I mean I'm much obliged, but I ain't done nothing." Larson, however, with a shamed look, took the bank-note that Ruthven tendered.

"You won't?" said Ruthven, smiling. The man shook his head. "Then I'll have to ask you to help me for nothing," said Ruthven, smiling again, but with a little grimace of pain. Leaning on the two men, he was helped up the hill. It was a climb that sent the blood to his head with the hideous pain of it. The drops stood on his white

forehead, and his hair was wet. Nevertheless, he made no sign beyond the deadly whiteness that succeeded the flush.

"I know we're hurtin' you awful," said Lars. "You look jest like Jimmy Wickers did when he spilled the iron on him, and he never hollered."

"Jimmy was a sandy man," said Ruthven, rather grimly.

"We're almost up," said the other workman. "Now—where's your buggy?"

Horse and buggy were gone; but Ruthven merely shrugged his shoulders. "It was too much to expect of the horse to wait," he said. "The question now is, what to do."

The man had been knitting his brows. "I don't see anything for it," said he, a trace of sullenness in his manner, "but for you to come to my house and wait till Larson can run over to town for the doctor. You'll have to excuse the house; my wife's away—and houses don't keep so well when the woman's gone, you know."

"My wife's away too," said Ruthven. "It's a nuisance having your wife away for Christmas, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is," said the other; and then he looked at Ruthven with quite a different expression. "Lean on me a little harder, sir," he said. Ruthven noticed the sir; he had not used it before.

"Before I go to your house," said Ruthven, "I ought to know your name."

"Don't you know?" said the man, with a flip of the eye-brow quite indescribable. "I'm Tony Davis."

Beyond a quick glance at Tony, and a slight shifting of his weight to Lars's shoulder, Ruthven gave no sign of surprise.

"He's thinking can he hobble off with Lars, and he's made up his mind he can't," thought Tony.

Really, Ruthven was unusually conscious of a little slip of paper in his breast pocket—a slip headed by Tony's name.

Tony gave Lars minute directions about finding a doctor and a carriage, and Lars went off on a trot.

"I guess he won't stop to hunt for his teeth," Tony remarked, assisting Ruthven to an open gate near by. "Lars ain't so bad, but he's chicken-hearted."

"You men don't think much of a scab, do you?" said Ruthven.

"No, sir. Well, you don't think much of a man, do you, that lets other fellows do the fighting for him, and if they win takes the good, and if they fail he don't get hurt, but makes it all the harder he can for them that's fighting for him?"

"Humph! I don't call that a fair way to put it," said Ruthven. "If I think that a man has a right to compete with us in business. If we can undersell him we do, but we don't slug him or beat him because he can undersell us."

The sentence ended in a little shiver of pain; and Tony, seeing this, threw open the door and let Ruthven enter. It was a little brown house with green blinds, wedged against the side of a hill the wreck of a flower garden in front. The room that they entered was chilly, but the flowered cushion in the big arm chair and the red curtains at the window gave a look of comfort, especially after Tony had set the fire smouldering in the grate-burner to blaze and had lighted the lamp.

"This is a pretty room," said Ruthven.

"Ain't it?" said Tony brightening. "My wife made them frames out of pine cones, and she pressed them autumn leaves in the corner. That's a tidy she worked. Things don't look like they do when she's home."

He made Ruthven sit down in the arm-chair, while he bathed the ankle and bandaged it; and Ruthven unhesitatingly watched him tearing up what he was sure was a shirt in good repair to furnish the bandages. The relief, however, was so great that he did not speak a word, but leaned back to close his eyes and sigh. Tony looked at the face laid back in his chair. It was a handsome face, with its iron-gray hair and clear complexion—the face of a man, Tony dimly recognized, who lived cleanly and wisely.

And that one man who did not look cruel, thought the striker, drearily, could keep five hundred men cold and hungry and heavy-hearted all winter. But he put aside his thoughts, and went into the kitchen adjoining, from which presently came the crackle of burning wood, then a welcome fragrance. The coffee was cheap, and there was boiled milk instead of cream, but never had coffee tasted so delicious to Ruthven since his boyhood. He drained the cup.

"That's good," said he.

Tony had tendered his refreshment with certain misgivings. Suppose the boss should scorn the coffee? Coffee was not plentiful with Tony, and he was giving away his Christmas's supply in an Arab fashion to his guest.

"Never mind," thought Tony; "I can drink it myself if he won't." But he smiled outright as he saw the satisfaction on Ruthven's face, and pressed a second cup on him. Then he recommended a smoke, and proffered—unless Mr. Ruthven preferred a cigar.

"Sorry I ain't an extra pipe better than this," said he handing over a clay pipe.

"Take one of my cigars in exchange," said Ruthven, and directly the president was puffing a clay pipe, and the strikers' chairman, with deep gravity, smoking one of Ruthven's Regalias.

They smoked in silence, until suddenly a perception of the situation struck both in a flash, and they both laughed.

"It is queer, isn't it?" said Ruthven. "Well, I was thinking that myself."

said Tony. "And I tell you the other thing I was thinking. Says I, 'Now here's the boss sitting right in my house and me opposite him; now it's a chance for him as well as me, though maybe he don't guess it. I can tell him fair and square about the men, and he can find out more than he can get in a year, or a dozn years, of just hearing reports.'"

"Well, I guess you're right there," said Ruthven, "and if you are willing there are some things I'd like to ask. In the first place, you know this strike is a failure, don't you—or are you still expecting to win?"

"No," said Tony; "I know we're beat. I've been trying to get the boys to come back for a while. Well, some of them know they can't get back themselves, and they want to make a big fight, hoping somehow they will win enough to squeeze in."

"But you know better?"

"Oh, yes, I know there ain't a chance for any of us, and I told the fellows so, but I don't believe you'd keep more'n the committee out."

"Neither do I, Davis."

Tony nodded, and drew a long breath. Ruthven went on: "Let's start fair Davis, and have no misunderstandings. I know you're the head of the committee, and I didn't intend to let you come back; but do you suppose I would ever have smoked this!—talking on his pipe and making a gesture with it—'if I hadn't changed my mind?'"

The blood rushed to Tony's brow; he caught his breath with a jerk.

"Come, now, would you? would you drink a man's coffee and smoke his tobacco, and then say no to him when he comes around for a job?"

"I would not, then," said Tony.

"Well, don't you think I can be as decent as you? Your old place is ready for you, Davis, if you will come round for it next week, when we open; and I know you'll do what you can to get the boys to declare the strike off, and that—you'll stay with them till they do."

"How do you know that, sir?" said Tony, in a low voice.

"Well, knowing something of you, I guess. Now, you see, we are really on the same side, Tony, and let's get to work. I have enough applications to start up without any of the old men, only I want to give them a chance."

"You'd rather we'd come back, sir, wouldn't you, or—don't you care?"

"I would very much rather, Davis."

"Tony sounds more natural, sir, well, I'm glad of that. I'll tell the boys. They're thinking you didn't care a rap whether they starved or not; that's why Tom there was so mad at you. He said, too, that you'd—would make the men give up the unions."

Ruthven shrugged his shoulders. "The union's a dead cock in the pit; why should I kick it? But, Tony, why did you strike? You knew I couldn't pay the wages you asked."

"Well, sir, it was like this. We was afraid the wages was going down further; and so we struck, not expecting, of course, to get the wages we asked for, but wanting to have a basis of compromise—like the man asks more for a horse than he expects to get, you know."

"And how?"—Ruthven raised himself up on one elbow for the question—"how would you have liked me to have proposed a bigger cut than I meant to make, for nothing but to be able to raise a little?"

"Not at all, sir," admitted Tony. Then he added: "I guess we made a mistake; but the cut was too big, and that's a fact. Then the way the bosses distributed the cut, it made it worse; they would take on men who was their own friends that didn't understand the work, and you know very well, sir, that one man who don't know the ropes can put the whole work of the show back."

"Well, I offered to redress any shop grievances if they were brought to me, but you struck and didn't give us time—"

"That was where we made the mistake, sir; but you see, Monday Nolan was laid off, and Tuesday Hay was laid off—"

"They weren't discharged; they were laid off simply, and because there was no work for them to do."

"Yes, sir; but you see, the men believed that was only a pretext, and Gaines he comes over and works the men up—"

"Yes, Gaines is secretary of the trades-union association of the town, a politician, and a shyster of a lawyer. You fellows always choose such bad advisers."

"We thought he meant well," said Tony, with a sigh. "Fact is, sir, there's so few sympathizers with labor, that if anybody gives us a kind word, we are that grateful we hate to think he's a liar."

Ruthven smoked thoughtfully, and Tony went on with more freedom.

"We done the best we could about keeping order," said he, "but a strike's a poor business that way; it sorter brings out all the mad in men, and the decent fellows stay at home, and the rip-scouring young lads that don't know what they do want go a-walking about and raising Cain! And it ain't in nature for men to stand being betrayed; we agreed to stand together and not try for ourselves till the strike was settled; but pretty soon the money began to give out, and then you ask them to send in their names if they wanted to go back to work, and we began to be suspecting each other. I don't know how they got onto Lars writing; I knew it, but I wasn't going to tell on the creator; he's a wife and six children—seven dreadful good excuses for scabbing. But that Tom Brady, he's that worried he takes to drink. You see, sir, he saved up money and he bought him a house and paid for it, and was living in good circumstances, you may say, when this come, and being straightened for money, the poor man let's his insurance policy slip, and his house burned down last week but one; and he's his wife and his family, and no house, and no money coming in, and all his bit of money saved up gone, and so he's bitter thinking you to blame, and he takes to drink and gets wild. And them boys—Well, sir, boys is the hardest of all to manage in a strike—young fellers that are all for fight and hurrah, and really mean no harm, but