The Ambition of Mark Truitt

4444444444444444444

HENRY RUSSELL MILLER

would come home; he did not like

to think of her out in the languorous

In time they did return. The mur-

mur of their voices on the little front

porch came to him through his open

window. Whiting seemed in no haste

to leave. Mark wondered impatiently

what they found to talk so long about,

At length, sleep as far away as ever,

he arose, dressed and went quietly

down stairs-with what intent he

hardly knew. On the bottom stair he

stopped, facing the door. Whiting was

on the point of leaving. Mark saw

him coolly put an arm around Kazia;

she suffered it. Hot anger-and some-

eavesdropper. Nor was it perceptibly

she laughed as she broke away. Whit-

ing went down the steps, whistling

when she went in. She started.

"Oh! Is that you?"

"I think it is."

porch a while."

thing within him.

shouldn't let him do that."

"Oh! You saw?"

take me away."

won't go away with him."

cried.

kiss

slackened

quick alarm.

Kazia!" . . .

cool fragments.

Why not?"

"I didn't mean to."

Mark was still standing on the stair

"That's a funny thing to say," she

laughed. "Your voice sounds funny,

He had just been condemning Whit-

ing for the indecent length of his stay.

Now he said: "Let's go out on the

They went out into the moonlight.

grimly in the direction of Whiting's

departure. It was past midnight; the

street slept. From the valley below

them came the rumble of the mills

that were teaching him fear and self-

control. He was silent for a few min-

"What is it?" she asked wonder-

"Why do you say I shouldn't?"

"He-he's not fit to touch you."

"He's very jolly and nice to me,"

"But you're not going, are you?" he

Kazia!" He did not know how his

"Why not?" She turned to him.

"Because," he began unsteadily, "be-

cause I want the best for you. Be-

Then she gave a little sigh. "I prom-

what he had done. His strong clasp

sense that was hers, the change in

"What is it?" She looked up in

"Nothing." To avoid her eyes he

caught her close again, burying his

face in her hair, and yielded to the

intoxication of her. "Oh! Kazia,

CHAPTER VIII.

Afire.

city could not remember, humid and

sickeningly hot. Children played lan-

guidly, always in the shade, and

flocked around ice wagons, quarreling

over the division of the fast melting,

In the mills the men toiled on,

'speeding up" as always to feed a

world hunger for steel. They drank

vast quantities of water; they saited

it that they might drink the more, be-

lieving that in much sweating alone

lay safety. There were giants in those

days. But sometimes they fell. A sud-

sea, a sharp blinding pressure upon

the brain-in a few minutes or fewer

hours they were dead; their names did

not always appear in the daily lists.

Some that did not die found their

The flerce heat blistered Mark's

naked sweating skin. The water he

drank carried out through his pores

July came, such a month as the

She sighed. "I don't know-yet."

she said quietly. "And-and he wants

night with Whiting.

(Copyright, 1913, by The Bobbs-Merrill Company)

gaily.

SYNOPSIS.

Mark Truitt, encouraged by his sweet-teart, Unity Martin, leaves Bethel, his lative town, to seek his fortune. Simon native town, to seek his fortune. Simon Truitt tells Mark that it long has been his dream to see a steel plant at Bethel and asks the son to return and build one if he ever gets rich. Mark applies to Thomas Henley, head of the Quinby Iron works, for a job and is sent to the construction gang. His success in that work wins him a place as helper to Roman Andzrejzski, open-hearth furnaceman. He becomes a boarder in Roman's home and assists Piotr, Roman's son, in his studies. Kazia, an adopted daughter, shows her gratitude in such a manner as to arouse Mark's interest in her.

CHAPTER VII-Continued.

"Yes, you would, Kazia. But I guess thing far sharper-boiled within the it's more than just the money. You see, in Bethel there's no chance, noth- cooled when he saw her deftly avoid ing to do; except grow old and nose the kiss Whiting would have taken; into your neighbor's business andand want the things you can't have."

"Yes," she said slowly, "I know." "You know? Do you want things, too?

"Want things!" She drew a long wondering breath, as she measured desire. She did not wait for his question. "To be different."

They sat a little above the carriage road, along which rolled the Sunday afternoon procession of pleasuretakers. He pointed to an open landau in which two women sat, primly upright, hands folded in laps and faces set straight ahead, the very picture of He sat upon the railing and stared



They Sat a Little Above the Carriage Road.

well-dressed, self-conscious respectability-as "different" from Kazia as I want only the best for you?" anything he could conceive. "Like that?"

"Yes, like that, Sometimes." She looked wistfully after the departing ingly into his eyes. respectabilities. "But mostly, just to belong to somebody."

"But Roman and the Matka and Piotr-"

"They're ashamed of me and afraid other people'll find out about me. When I went to school the other boys and girls said things-and did things. I didn't care." Her head went up and her voice told how passionately she had cared. "But Piotr told them at home and they wouldn't let me go any more. They'd be glad if I were gone. And some day-I will go."

"But where, Kazia?" "I don't know," she said wearily. "If I knew, I'd go now. Some place where they won't know about me. Here nobody, when they find out, treats me like other people. Except," she added, "Jim Whiting."

"And me," he said gently. "And you." She turned to look searchingly into his eyes. "Don't it really make any difference to you?"

"I settled that question once for all last Sunday." Her look of gratitude disturbed him strangely. He stirred uncomfortably.

She saw, but did not understand. She pointed to the sinking sun. 'See! It's getting late. I must go

home and get your supper." He took her hand and helped her to rise. But he did not release the

"Have you liked it today? And will den drying up of sweat, a violent nau-

you come again?" He smiled down upon her. In her eyes was still the look of gratitude, of trust. "If you want to,"

she answered simply.

And in the weeks that followed they strength forever broken. did repeat that holiday more than

Mark did not try to analyze his pleasure in those weeks. His heart the food that should have nourished said: "I am young and life should be him. The heavy labor put upon him a thought of which his stomach revolted. bright. But this existence-toil, eat, sleep and toil again—is eating my youth away. I have a right to this nerves, impeding thought, became in self, still dressed, on the bed, tossing So-scrap him, of course!" little pleasure." The only real shadow his overwrought state exquisite tor- restlessly in the vain search for an was that cast by Jim Whiting.

The weekly bulletins to Unity contained important omissions.

One night he was in his room, sleepwith Kazia after supper. She had had swered only with a venomous giare rose. just time to make her simple toilet that summoned the master's sardonic away. Mark lay there, tossing restlessly, visioning the two in some seterly. The big Pole felt and showed but awake. His mind was beginning cluded spot where Whiting could make the effects of the intense heat, but to behave queerly, seeing strange love to her undisturbed. The thought he was the same unflurried philosoph- shadowy objects that moved stealthily

beset by a new temptation. When their turns were ended Roman and the men invariably flocked to the near- door. He made an effort to speak. est saloon and there drank repeatedly -whisky and brandy mostly-until vigor returned to their wornout bodies. toed softly to the bedside and leaned tened to the mills' strident voice. It was a false vigor, Mark knew, and over him. short-lived. But there were times cease from fatigue, of spirited outlook lured him almost irresistibly.

And one evening he followed Roman and his companions to the bar.

"Whisky," he ordered.

Roman put out a restraining hand. 'You better not drink," he counseled funny tricks in the dark." gravely. "Or only beer."

Mark laughed recklessly and repeated his order. Thrice he drank. ing cry. "You are sick!-Wait!" The weight dragging at his limbs soon maudlin. Before he reached home the whisky had possessed his unac- low. customed brain; he was staggering. drunk. Roman undressed him and he had had his period of forgetfulness. | myself."

The next day he paid-and the cravhis custom, until Mark saw the care and forbade.

"You needn't be afraid. It costs too the key, "costs too much."

"Zo? But you are tiredt. Unt you are not strong. Vy do you not leaf hers. "Kazia, Kazia!" he breathed. the vork?"

"Give up now, after holding on this far! I guess you don't mean that. But some day I'll get where I want-I'll have life by the throat." It did not seem melodramatic to him. "Then I'll make it pay for this-on its knees." Roman shook his head gravely, as at a blasphemy.

life iss the master. But you are tiredt." And in the midst of the ordeal by fire he fought his first battle. At times in his hand. he was almost grateful for the physical weariness that distracted him from the inner struggle.

He learned then how insensibly utes, while he tried to master the ugly ground. She had become vague, of little substance; she was a story he had read a long time ago. But she "Kazia," he blurted out, "you was real, too, in that she was a habit.

There was a memory that accuseda girl, for once warm and yielding. in the last glory of the sunset, clinging to him with the tremulous cry: "You won't forget me out there?" He had made a vow. . . Within a twelvemonth he had clasped another.

That other was both real, intensely real-and near. He tried to avoid her; it was not easy.

Kazia went about, out what she felt too deep for words, too voice was shaking. "Promise me you solemn for laughter. She did not again break into song. But no one seeing her eyes could have doubted what had he given her? "Kazia-" he began. come into her heart. And she gave no thrift in love.

cause-because this!" With a sudden Her happiness awed, sometimes alrough reckless movement he caught most frightened her, but she would not her close to him. She suffered him as question it. When her sixth sense she had Jim Whiting. "Don't you know stirred, she shamed it into silence. She saw in her lover's eyes a trouble "I think I do." She put a hand to that deepened as the days went by. his cheek and turned his face out of heard it in his voice, felt it when he the shadow, looking long and search-

One evening-the last before the hot wave broke; but he did not know that ise-now." Her lips waited for his -he dragged himself homeward, believing he had come to the end of his Gradually his senses cleared. He endurance. began to see the ugly treachery of

"But I suppose I haven't," he sighed. 'Probably I'll just go on and on-but some day I'll drop. I wonder why I She seemed to feel, with the sixth do it! I wish the end would come soon-now." He thought he meant that.

Even the bath brought no relief. He sat down to a supper against the very



He Saw the Figure Crouching on the Floor at the Bedside.

weariness sleep could not dispel. The After a few mouthfuls he left the table incessant roar, tearing at quivering and went to his room. He threw him- he had. And now he's breaking down. ture. Hate, for the mills, for those easy position. His body was one dull above who drove so pitilessly, even for ache. The overheated blood pounded the men beside him, filled him; and through his veins, each throb a knife fear. Once, when Henley, passing, that hacked his brain. His skin was makes it look different, don't it?" he less. There had been no little chat gave his careless nod, he was an- hot and dry, his mouth parched; fever

The late derkness fell, dispelled a before Jim Whiting came to carry her grin. Mark could have killed him then. little by the faint glow from a nearby He envied Roman, often almost bit- street lamp; it found him lying inert was not a sedative. He wished they | ical workman as even always with a about. He caught himself muttering | And that isn't enough. You've got to | "Of course," Mark addressed Roman,

cheerful word; no fear of collapse dis- to them. He wondered if he were make beasts of us, every man dogging "you want me to go. 1 suppose you growing delirious, but he could not the fellow ahead, glad when he drops blame me. I blame myself somehow-Through watching him Mark was summon energy to call out or arise. and lets go his job. Damn you all, I don't know why. It-it isn't fair! It It must have been 10 o'clock when anyhow!" he thought he heard a light tap on the

"Come." The door opened. Some one tip-

"Are you sick?" came the broken when the thought of the hour of sur- anxious whisper. "You looked so tired But he who had come so near to falland you came up without-speaking ing could know the bitterness of him You haf mine chop. It iss not goot I've been-so afraid."

He caught her hand and clung to it. "Would you mind staying a while?" he whispered back. "My head does

She put her free hand to his hot forehead. Then she gave a low pity-

lifted, the misery rankling in his heart returned with towels and a basin of lighted the gas jet and turned it very uncle at the furnace.

"Close your eyes now," she said softly, "and try to sleep. I didn't tell put him to bed without supper. But any one, because I wanted to help you

He lay passive, while she placed job. ing gnawed more sharply. That evel cold wet towels over his eyes, bathed ning Roman, understanding, avoided his hands and wrists in the icy water the saloon and led Mark by a straight and stroked his throbbing temples. He course homeward. Thereafter it was wondered dully that hands which worked so hard could be so gentle. For many minutes they did not speak.

The stealthy shapes were laid. much. Everything," he added with a The sharp pounding in his brain bebitterness for which Roman had not gan to subside. Drowsiness was stealing over him.

His hands groped until they found

"Hush!" she said. "It's such a pretty name," he murmured sleepily.

He felt her lips on his forehead. After that he slept.

When he awoke the room was dark. A cool moist wind swept strongly in calamity must have come to him, for upon him. He heard the rumble of as he and Mark set out for the mills far away retreating thunder. And with | that morning the irritability that had "You shouldt not say zo. Alvays the heat the headache and overpow- marked him since his first collapse ering fatigue had gone. He drew a gave way to a deep dejection. long sighing breath. Something stirred

Then in the faint reflection of the I think Gracey wants to see you. street lamp he saw the figure crouch. He tried to make it very gentle. ing on the floor at the bedside, her cheek pillowed in his outstretched Unity had receded into the back- hand. It took him a moment to realize what had brought her there,

"Are you awake?" she whispered. "Yea."

"And better?" "All right now, thanks to you --

Why, you're all wet!" "Yes." She rose stiffly to her knees. "It's been storming and it rained in on me a little. But it's cooler now."

"And you-What time is it?" "A clock just struck four." "And you've been here all the time?" "I was afraid you'd wake up and

need some one. And-I wanted to." "Kazia, why do you do these thing

"It is my place." Her place! What place, then, had But more than cowardice sealed his to her lover with both hands, knowing lips. She might have been consciously in your time. But I don't think so. fighting for her love. She bent over You're getting too old for the work." and kissed him

"Hush! You need to sleep."

CHAPTER IX.

Liquid Iron. The hot spell was over.

For fifty-seven years Roman had toiled as few men can toil-on the tiny farm that had been his father's. to satisfy the greedy tax gatherer; in Essen, learning another craft under the master Krupp; in the new land whose promise had lured him. Not once had his superb strength and endurance failed him; therefore he had never known fear, had not believed that the fate that overtook others must some day be his. He had been very prodigal of that strength.

But one day-such a one as in that season the steel-workers called coolhe staggered and fell. It was three days before he could go back to his job. During that time Mark Truitt was in charge of the furnace.

He who returned was not the careful, precise, unflurried workman. He knew fear. He tired easily and was uncertain of temper. The heat fretted him and he worried over his work. He lost in efficiency; several times he tapped the furnace either too soon or too late and was sharply reprimanded. To keep up and to forget the new weakness he drank more whisky than ever. Within two weeks he collapsed again.

It was during Roman's third lay-off that Gracey, the foreman, said to Mark: "It looks like Roman's done

"It looks that way," Mark assented. "It's come pretty sudden with him. It does that sometimes.'

"Yes." Mark stared sadly through the furnace mouth at the boiling flameswept slag. The drama had become a steel of which chemists took no account-the lives and souls of men. "He can't expect to keep his job." he heard the foreman continue, "away half the time like this. And last week

he spoiled two heats. I'm afraid we'll have to let him go." "Yes!" Mark's mouth twisted in an ugly sneer. "He's given you the best | in hand once more.

"That's funny talk," grunted the foreman. "Especially since the superintendent and I've been talking it over room. But he knew that she stayed and we think of you for the job. That | within hearing. It was Roman who broke the silence.

laughed. "No, it doesn't. Do you suppose I haven't been thinking of that-counting on it-ever since he broke first?" Mark turned hot eyes on the foreman. 'Why, that's the worst of you. You to come back here at all." drive us to the limit and when we, break you kick us off like an old shoe. | quietly, "it iss not for you."

"Then I'm to tell the superintendent you don't want the job?"

Mark looked again into the boiling furnace, felt its consuming breath, lis-Through every sense he caught their

"No!" he snarled in savage contempt for himself and his hollow high indignation. "You can tell him I'm a beast like all the rest.'

He was on the night turn then. In the morning he went reluctantly to promptly. Roman's house. At breakfast he was She left the room quietly. Soon she alone with Kazia. But there was no there was really nothing more to be love-making that morning. Nor did he said. He went upstairs. dissolved. He was cheerful, talkative, water in which ice tinkled. She explain that he was to supersede her

> "How's Roman?" he asked with an added inward twinge.

> "He's not much better," she sighed. 'We're worried about him. He frets because he thinks he might lose his

He said nothing.

"Do you think he will?" "Yes." He made shift to raise his eyes to hers. "I think he will."

"Just because he's sick. Oh, surely

"Because he's used up. And when you're used up, you've got to get out to make room for better-for those that can still be useful."

"Oh, that would break his heart. How I hate those mills!" she cried. 'But don't tell him you think that." "No." His eyes fell. "I won't tell

him. He'll find out soon enough." Roman did not go back to work until his shift was on day turn again. Some presentiment of the impending

It was not until they were entering the mill shed that Mark said: "Roman,

"Zo?" Roman halted, looked intently at Mark. He drew a long whistling breath, "Zo!" He understood. But his presentiment had not told him how deep the hurt would be

He tried to look the man he had been. But his tired lack-luster eyes belied the stiffly martial shoulders terpreted anew and aright the passion and firm step. He went straight to the foreman.

"Mine chop?" he asked steadily. You vill take it avay?" "I'm afraid we'll have to let you go, Roman

"Unt vy?" There was no complaint. "You're laying off too much," the foreman answered bluntly. "And you're getting careless in your work. You've lost your grip.

"I haf been zick. Meppy," Roman made an effort to speak the confidence he did not feel, "meppy I'll get better." "I hope so. You've been a good man Gracey was still young: he could speak

carelessly of growing old "In my time! Oldt," Roman repeated slowly. "I haf not beliefedt

He did not wince. But the shoul-

ders he had been holding so bravely erect sagged. "Oldt! It iss zo."

He started to move away, but the foreman called him back. "See here, Roman," he said with rough kindness. "You've always drawn good pay. And you've quite a bit laid by, I hear. Why don't you go back to your own country and take it easy

the rest of your life?" Roman eyed him listlessly. "Here

the vork of strong men." He left the foreman and walked slowly, heavily before the furnaces un- it-that's all. Isn't it better for mea til he came to his old station. There to have it than a stranger? Roman," work; in particular watching the fig- that way." ure-so slight for that labor-of the young man who had endured where stronger men fell. How neatly he fitted into his new niche!

"Unt he iss not oldt. Oldt!" Roman shivered

eat-his supper in the saloon that face the ordeal of sitting at table with Roman's family.

There was no sense of triumph in his promotion, honestly earned though | fore you came. I couldn't stand that." it was as his world measured such A little shudder passed over her. things.

He walked to Roman's house, with again. "I've tried--" a firm tread that was the outward exwhat was coming. He dreaded it, the man by whose fall he profited, must formed only to sever. Yet he did not But I can give-everything." flinch. He might rail against the ishad always the courage of his choice.

tragedy in the moment he had dreaded. breath the scales quivered. Then: The family was gathered as usual in the dining room. Roman had himself

Mark stopped in the doorway. For the life of him he could not speak the commonplace salutation on his lips. He saw Kazia steal quietly from the

'You haf eaten?" "At the saloop." "Zo? You shouldt haf come. Ve

Piotr snarled: "You've got a nerve

isn't my fault you've been fired. You ought to see that. And I'd be a fool not to take your job, now that you can't have it any more."

"Huh!" sneered Piotr. "You're glad

enough of the chance, too,' "Plotr!" The boy subsided Roman menace; his spirit cowered before it. | went on: "It iss not your fault I am oldt, no. But-it iss better you go. to me. They said, let you sleep. But | through whose fall advancement would | for me to see unt hear of the work of strong men ven I am not strong." "I will go tonight."

"I haf not zaidt tonight. Ven you. haf another goot place to go."

"I will go tonight." "Well-good-by, then," said Piotr

Mark waited a moment longer. But

His carpetbag packed—a brief task -he waited. And this was hard-



'Huh!" Sneered Piotr. "You're Glad Enough of the Chance."

hard! Now there was at least the sem-

blance of a struggle. It almost shook him because with that went-Kazia. Instinct, brushing aside the mist of false teachings, inhe had thought ignoble, warned him to take this whole love while yet there

was time. "Almost thou persuadest me. . . But not altogether. His desire-tosurvive, to win his place among the masters-still held the whip, kept him facing doggedly his straight road ahead. And, as if jealous of any rival for supremacy over him, it claimed the pale lesser love. He could not see the unlettered Hunky girl sharing that

conquest When she came, she stood for a moment at the door, a question and a

great fear in her eyes. "I-I was waking for you," he said. "I knew. But I couldn't come any

scoper." Her glance fell to the bag, rose again. She walked slowly toward him. He rose. Scarcely an arm's length. away, she halted. Suddenly tears stood in her eyes. She put out both handsin a quick pleading gesture.

"Don't go!" "They don't want me to stay, Kazia." "That's because you've taken his job. Don't take it!"

He shook his head. "You don't understand. There's no reason why I shouldn't take it." "He's your friend." "You don't understand," he repeated wearily. "If I could give him back

iss mine country. But I do not vant his job by not taking it, I'd not taked to take it easy. Alvays haf I vorkedt it." He believed that then! He began again the old reasoning. "But; I couldn't. Some one else would get; he stopped, watching the crew at he concluded bitterly, "ought to see it"

"I know there isn't any good reason." But-I couldn't go with you, if you took it." She couldn't go with him! His eyes

fell miserably. "Oh, no!" With one swift step she, Mark Truitt ate-or pretended to bridged the space between them, throwing her arms around his neck. night. He could not bring himself to "Oh, no! I didn't mean that. I'd go with you, whatever you did. I'd have to. I couldn't stay here, when you're gone-go back to the way it was be-

"You can't understand," he cried'

"I know. I've seen it troubling you, pression of his mood. He knew just though I didn't know what it was. But -can't you see? I'm the reason, moment when he must again face the You'll never find any one that can love you like I can. It's all I know-totragedy. There was an element in again break the sweet ties this life love-to love you. I don't ask much.

> With a force that must have hurtsues presented to him, but at least he her he freed himself from her classe and sank shaking into the chair, cov-There was none of the trappings of ering his face with his hands. For a

"Kazia," he whispered, "I haven't. been square with you. There's-there's another girl-"

"There is-And you-" After what seemed like a long silence he dared to glance up to see how she had taken it. By then she had crept to the threshold and was looking back at him. About her lips. a dazed, foolish little smile was playing. And her eyes were the eyes of one who had just seen a great horror. When he looked up again, she was

An hour later-how he could not have told-he found himself wander-"Piotr," Roman reproved him ing in the streets, carrying his ancient

carpetbag.