PAID IN FULL

Novelized From Eugene Walter's Great Play

...By...

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CHAPTER II.

JAMES SMITH, superintendent of the Latin-American Steamship company's docks, had arrived in response to the president's summons, conveyed to him by the telephone. Smith, known to his familiars as Jimsy, was a tall, gaunt, angular man, bearing all over him the stamp of westerner. He was, in fact, from Colorado, where he began his active career by engaging in mining. Scant success attended his efforts in this direction, however, and after working with the dogged determination that was one of his traits until even his patience was exhausted he finally entered the employ of the steamship company in whose service he had risen to his present position, with headquarters in New York.

There was something about Smith that caused men, and women also, for that matter, to take to him on sight. The unbounded good nature, big heartedness and unselfishness beaming in his blue eyes and in his whimsical smile were written in every line of his clean shaven face. Another thing that made him remarked by all who came in contact with him was his absolute imperturbability. In all his thirty-seven years of existence he never had been known to "get a move on," not even when a premature blast in a mine had sent the diggers helter skelter for safety and carried death and suffering to many. Smith had walked tranquilly away amid the rain of rock and earth until it was all over. Then he had returned and organized the work of rescue, his placidity causing the others instinctively to look to him for direction. Nor was his speech more hurried than were his movements. He spoke but little, and then his words came in a quiet, even, distinct drawl. But he "got there" as quickly as most men, and a good deal quicker than some whose nerves were highly strung and with whom rapidity of action was as necessary as breathing, for he was possessed of keen powers of observation and common sense, an earnestness of purpose that gave his utterances weight and an integrity as unshakable as the rock of Gibraltar. As a fitting, almost necessary, complement of such a nature he was endowed with a sense of humor that added not a little to the attraction he exercised for those who knew him sufficiently well to be able to appreciate his qualities of heart and mind.

He took a calm, all embracing survey of the office as he entered, looked over to Brooks' desk and saluted him with a cordial motion of the hand and instructed a boy to notify Captain Williams of his arrival. He was ushered immediately into the chief's presence.

That worthy, who, like his superintendent, was clean shaven, was seated at his desk in his shirt sleeves, and the whole room, despite the wide open windows, was thick from the smoke from an old blackened corncob pipe at which he was puffing vigorously. He was a burly man, and the short, thick neck, the broad shoulders, the powerful, big jointed fingers and the muscles that stood out in bunches on the hairy arms disclosed by his rolled up shirt sleeves denoted that he possessed unusual physical strength. An ugly man to get into an argument with was Williams, one who, it needed no mind reader to judge, would be capable of following the word with a blow that would crush an ordinary opponent. For years, as Brooks had intimated, he had led the roughest life a man can lead, hammering by sheer brute strength a way to wealth by ways in which scruple had counted for nothing at all and expediency for a good deal, and his entrance upon a higher plane of civilization had not imparted much polish to his appearance, habits or speech, which were those of the old time sailing ship mariner, although of late years he had striven to conform more closely to the examples of refinement he witnessed in the only polite society he cared for, which was that of the family of his dead friend, Stanley Harris, who was general manager of the Latin-American line when he obtained control of it. He had a way of glaring at a person from under his bushy eyebrows with a scrutiny that seemed to read through and up and down him and made him most ill at ease under it.

He made his decisions promptly, authoritatively, after the manner of a man accustomed to command and to be obeyed without question, and he never changed them, at least in his business and administrative dealings. Add to all this a voice like a foghorn, the effect of which, when he raised it, was, as he knew full well, to make his subordinates quake and to intimidate others who had to do with him, and it will be realized that he lived up fully to his reputation of being a hard man.

For his quiet, unmovable and thoroughly capable dock superintendent he entertained a certain respect. He knew from experience that the man was not the least bit afraid or even disturbed by his bullying manner and his bellowing and that his glare, always squarely met, had no more effect upon him than it would have upon the bronze statue of Washington which stands sentinel on the steps of the subtreasury in Wall street.

Smith lowered himself slowly and easily into a big armchair beside the president's desk.

"Two delegates from the Longshoremen's union were here just now," announced the captain. "They say the freight handlers are going to strike."

"Ya-as?" said Smith interrogatively.

"Yes. What do you know about it?"

"Nothing, except that they came to me with a demand for higher pay for the men. I referred them to you."

"Well, I didn't leave 'em any loophole for doubt as to my position in the matter."

"You turned them down?"

"Turned 'em down! Of course. What do you think? Suppose I handed 'em a raise on a silver platter and bowed 'em out of the door?"

"I don't suppose anything about it. I'm asking for information."

"Them two blatherskites came swaggering and blustering in here and said every last one of the men would quit tomorrow morning at 11 o'clock unless they got 3 cents more an hour. They wasn't swaggering when they went out of here, I tell you. I pretty soon took the starch out of 'em."

A faint smile flitted over the superintendent's face, but he ventured no remark.

"I told 'em," Williams went on, "that I wouldn't give 'em a cent a century more and to strike and be d——d. I also told 'em that any man who did go out would never get another job with this company, and, by Sam, he won't!"

The captain's voice had risen to a roar, and he brought his fist down on the desk with such force that pens and pencils went flying in all directions and the ink splashed from the wells in their solid crystal stand.

"Them labor agitators ain't got no notion of the fitness of things. They ain't got a grasp on economic conditions for a cent. They got to do something to live without working, so every once in awhile they go to the men as pays 'em to be walking delegates, gives 'em some glib talk about their rights and advises 'em to strike for more money. Do they look around and try to find out whether an advance is warranted by the conditions? Nary a look. Do any of the men they hand out their advice to try to find out? Not on your life! They go ahead like a lot of sheep and strike and starve and blame the result on capital."

Smith nodded.

"If they carry out their threat and quit," continued the captain, "you will clear all the strikers from the docks, throw 'em off if necessary, knock their silly blocks off, but tell them as wants to work that full protection will be given. I'll arrange with police headquarters to have a sufficient force of bluecoats on hand to guard our property and will also notify our docks at other ports to be prepared. You will fix up accommodations for the strike breakers in the sheds here until the trouble is over and make arrangements to bring men from the inland cities. In this matter you need spare no expense. Understand?"

"I guess so," replied the superintendent.

"Then it's up to you."

"Anything else you want to see me about?"

"Not now. You can get in touch with me any time you want me. You know about where I'm to be found."

Smith drew in his long legs, raised himself from the chair and took up his hat to go.

"See here, Smith," said the captain, his voice rising gradually to its fearsome bellow, "it's nigh on to twoscore years since I took my first vessel, the Sally Moran, out of Frisco as master and owner, bound for the south sea islands to trade, and I've commanded my own ship every minute since and held my own against all sorts of lubbers as would have done me and done for me if they could. And do you think I'm going to be dictated to by any white livered gas bag of a crawling delegate who comes here holding a knife to my throat by threatening a turnout without giving me a chance

"Yes, sir, by Sam, sir, like this!"

to meet it if I don't give in to his demands on the spot? No, sir, not by an all fired sight! No, sir, not in a thousand years! I own this outfit from keel to main peak, and if I can't run it my own way I'll scuttle it and go down with it. Understand? And if any man's looking for a fight with me he'll find me quick enough, and I'll break him, no matter who or what he is. Yes, sir, by Sam, sir, like this!"

Seizing a thick ruler on the desk, he snapped it without apparent effort, and as he sat glaring there with his disheveled hair, his pugnacious, massive underjaw protruding and his big fists tightly clinched on the broken wood, causing the muscles of his arms to bulge like knots on a gnarled tree, he presented the embodiment of might and ferocity.

"I don't know but what you're right, Cap'n Williams," drawled the superintendent with his unchangeable equanimity. "Anyhow, you sure are entitled to do what you like with your own."

He went out and on his way to the office exit stopped at Brooks' desk.

"Well, how's things, boy?" he inquired with an interest so kindly that one might have thought there was nothing else in the world with which his mind was occupied and never could have suspected that there lay before him for immediate solution the problem of preparing for a great strike that threatened to tie up the business of one of the most important steamship lines in the country, with ramifications extending from Boston all around the coast of South America to San Francisco.

"Oh, so, so," answered Brooks. "By the bye, I'd be awful glad if you'd come up to supper tonight. Emma was saying only this morning that we hadn't seen anything of you for a week."

"That's so. I've got to square myself with Emma, though it hasn't been my fault altogether."

"Then we'll expect you to supper?"

"I can't promise, because I've a deal to do between now and this evening, but I'll come if I can."

"So long, Jimsy."

"So long."

And Smith sauntered out to attend to one of the greatest emergencies he had ever been called upon to meet in his life.

CHAPTER III.

HE was a skillful architect indeed who first devised the bandbox apartment houses so common now in all parts of New York and must have sat up many nights working out how to extri ate the maximum of rent revenue from the area on which he had to fit the structure.

If there were any flats in Harlem of smaller dimensions than the one of four rooms occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Brooks the most experienced and persistent hunter after a place in which to lodge his family with relative economy and some semblance of comfort would have had the time of his or her life finding it. And if other flats there were more luxuriously fitted up, as easily might have been—in fact, certainly must have been—the case, at least there was none, whatever its size, that was kept cleaner or neater or in which more effective use of available material had been made than that over which Mrs. Emma Brooks presided as mistress and factotum.

And Mrs. Brooks herself—how she graced it, altogether unconsciously! As the elder of two daughters of Stanley Harris, who, while not rich, had been well to do, she had been brought up in the comfort of a good home and had enjoyed the advantage of an education at a private seminary. Her father, whose constant companion she had been and whose sense of democracy in the matter of association she had inherited, had adored her, and when she had given her heart to Joseph Brooks, electing him from among numerous suitors, including James Smith, he gave his consent to their union against his own judgment and in face of the strenuous opposition of his wife, esteeming the girl's happiness superior to all other considerations.

Brooks, who had been in the employ of the Latin-American Steamship company for one year and had been brought into relations with the family by virtue of his selection as secretary to her father, the general manager, had no means whatever of his own, and his salary, then $60 a month, was a desperately small income on which to begin housekeeping for a girl reared as she had been. But her father helped them, and the young couple counted upon his influence to procure the advancement of his son-in-law to a more remunerative post.

Unfortunately for them, however, Mr. Harris had died a few weeks after their wedding, and they found themselves thrown upon their own resources. Mrs. Harris, a selfish, shallow, unfeeling woman with social pretensions, who regarded her daughter's marriage with the young clerk as a mesalliance and Brooks himself with disdain, left them to shift for themselves and with her other daughter, Beth, who was seven years younger than Emma and shared her mother's views, as she imitated her haughtiness, settled down to the enjoyment of the modest fortune her husband had left her and the indulgence of the ostentation she loved, but which during Mr. Harris' lifetime she had never been able to gratify to the top of her bent. She did not for this, however, withdraw altogether from association with Emma and Brooks and continued on more or less amicable terms with them. Now and then she condescended to call upon them with Beth, but her visits, as a rule, were a good deal of a trial to the young couple, for she regarded Brooks' failure to get on in the steamship company as a vindication of her opinion as to his ability and the judiciousness of their marriage and was prone to condone with her daughter, assume an exasperating I-told-you-so attitude and lament what might have been.

During the four years of their married life Brooks' salary had been raised only $20 a month, although in addition to his work as accountant, to which he had been assigned after Mr. Harris' death, that of collector had been thrust upon him. It had been a hard, bitter experience for pretty little Mrs. Brooks, this unaccustomed drudgery of housework, this continuous scouring of greasy pots and pans and washing of dishes, which she loathed; this deprivation of comforts and luxuries that she had known all her life; this privation of many personal things considered indispensable by the dainty woman; this necessity of perpetual rigid economizing, which barely sufficed to make both ends meet. She deprived herself of much needed clothing, to say nothing of finery, that Joe might go properly clad to his office, but she never for that reason descended to slovenliness, never "let herself go," as so many women in their own households make the mistake of doing, and never had she allowed one word of complaint, one indication of regret, to escape her. She had married Joe for love, for better or for worse, and resigned herself bravely and cheerfully to the consequences, however hard to bear, hoping for the better times that were so long in coming and encouraging her husband to fight on and win.

Joe, for his part, lacked his wife's grit and energy, and constant disappointment had undermined his fortitude. He loved Emma. He hardly could have done otherwise, though calculation had entered largely into his courting of her. Chivalrously, while the sweet bliss of their early married life held him in its spell, he had done as much of the heavier work of the menage as he could to spare her when time and opportunity afforded, but very naturally he had soon tired of this—where is the man who does not?—and by degrees had left as much of it as he could to her, except when his moods of optimism and affectionate solicitude impelled him to go to her assistance. At such times he wanted to do it all.

On the evening following his outburst at the office he was still resentful and "down in the mouth" when he let himself into his little flat, and the smiles of his wife as she raised her rosebud lips to receive his kiss of greeting failed to dispel his gloom.

"You seem out of sorts tonight, dear," she said solicitously. "Anything wrong at the office?"

"Nothing in particular. I'm tired and hungry after slaving all day in this awful heat, that's all."

"Never mind, supper's all ready, so sit down and tuck in."

"What did you get?"

"Chops and potatoes."

Joe turned up his nose, but took his seat at table and began to eat. He answered his wife's questions in monosyllables. His thoughts, it was plain, were not on his meal or Emma's conversation, and, seeing that he was preoccupied and troubled, she ceased to try to engage his attention.

"I paid the gas bill today," he vouchsafed at length. "Ninety cents more than last month."

"Ninety cents more!" she commented with concern. "I'm sure we didn't use half as much. And we owe the butcher four-sixty."

"Every month it costs more to live. I don't know what we are going to do, I'm sure."

"I'm sorry, Joe. Goodness knows I try to be as economical as I can."

"I know, but it's all wrong. It's all wrong that you should be spoiling your hands with those beastly greasy pans. They weren't meant for such work. I wish we could afford a hired girl."

"So do I, but we can't, so what's the use of wishing? Didn't you get the raise you asked Captain Williams for?" she inquired.

"No."

He hung his head and lapsed into gloomy silence. She dropped the morsel she was raising to her mouth and rose from the table, filled with dismay, her appetite completely gone. Tears of disappointment followed the realization of what the failure of their plans meant, for neither had doubted that his request would be complied with, and she had built many castles in the air on the strength of it. A few dollars more a week added to their distressingly small income would have meant much to them. But, gazing at her husband sitting there utterly dejected and crushed, her heart went out to him in pity and love, and she moved over to his chair and put her arm consolingly round his neck.

"Never mind, Joe, boy," she urged; "don't look so solemn. We're no worse off than we were before, and you'll win out some day."

She placed her hand under his chin and raised his head to kiss him. He saw that she was smiling at him encouragingly through her tears, but refused to be comforted.

"I made out the payroll today," he said. "Three other men in the office who also asked for a raise last month got it; so did Smith."

"What, Jimsy?" she asked.

"I said Smith. There's only one Smith in the office," he replied somewhat surlily.

"Well, I'm glad for Jimsy's sake he got what he wanted."

"I think he told Williams to come across with more money or he'd quit."

"How much did he ask for?"

"Eighteen hundred."

"Eighteen hundred? My gracious, isn't that fine?"

"It means that he'll be getting nearly $5,000 a year now. Great for him, isn't it?"

"Yes, indeed it is."

"I saw Jimsy today. Asked him to come to supper. He said he would if he could."

"I wonder why he didn't?"

Her husband did not answer immediately. When he did he burst out savagely:

"Suppose he thought we couldn't afford it. Two don't eat as much as three."

"Why, Joe, how absurd!" she laughed, beginning to gather up the supper plates. "Jimsy knows it's pot luck."

"That's the trouble. Jimsy knows—your mother knows—Williams knows—everybody knows, and they're always talking about how you've got to work and slave because you married me and all that sort of stuff."

"Jimsy doesn't."

"Well, he thinks it, and your mother's always rubbing it in, harping on the same old string—that I ain't worthy of you, that it's a shame the way you have to work and slave, that I don't seem to get along at all and that you"—

"Oh, don't mind mother; you know her."

"She never did want us to marry."

"But dear old dad did, and he was the one I wanted to please—after you, Joe, of course. Mother is just a bit peculiar. I'm sure she doesn't understand me much, and I'm equally sure that I don't understand her, so we won't bother about her. Just sweep up a bit, will you, while I wash the dishes? Jimsy may drop in by and by."

Brooks went into the kitchen, donned an apron from force of habit instilled into him by his wife, ever careful of his clothes, and reappeared with a carpet broom and a dust cloth. He was laboring under excitement, as was manifest by the reckless manner in which he used the broom. Finally, with an expression of determination, he said in a firm voice:

"Emma, you know it will be six months or a year before I get another chance at a raise—unless, of course, I quit and get a job somewhere else. I was thinking that perhaps you're tired and want to call it off."

"Call what off?"

"Why, everything—the whole business. I mean our marriage," he said desperately.

Her eyes opened wide with incredulous astonishment.

"You mean separation?"

"That's exactly what I mean."

"What for—because I'm tired?"

"Something like that."

"What an idea! You must have the blues badly to talk such nonsense as that. Don't you think it would be as well to wait until I complain?"

"You have complained."

"No—at least I can't remember."

"Not in words, but"—

"But what?"

"Look here," he said impatiently, "don't you suppose I have eyes? Don't you suppose I have feelings? I've seen—I know that you're sick of this drudgery and all the rest—sick of it and sorry. There's Smith with his five thousand—he wanted you first. You could have"—

She interrupted him sharply, her face flushing.

"Joe!"

"Well, I think"—

"That's enough of that!"

"Oh, well," he declared sullenly, turning away and dropping into a chair. "I didn't mean"—

She followed him and placed her hand on his shoulder.

"Joe, I married you because I loved you," she said gently, "and for nothing else in the world. There wasn't any influence except that, and that overcame all the rest—mother and all of them."

"I know all about that."

"There has been a little hard luck"—

"There has been a precious sight too much of it."

"I know you haven't been treated right, but bad luck and ups and downs are what a woman ought to expect when she marries. She has to take the bad as well as the good, and she ought to know enough to accept the one as cheerfully as the other when the bad is nobody's fault. That is what I think, and that is what I have tried to do. But there are some things"—

"Joe, I married you because I loved you."

She paused, reluctant to carry her thoughts further into words.

"What? You may as well say all you've got to say while you're about it," he snapped.

"It's just this," she went on. "Never refer to Jimsy in the way you did. I married you, Joe. Please try and leave unsaid things that *might* make me regret it."

He ventured no further remark and lapsed into his gloomy reflections. Emma put her arm around his neck and snuggled her face against his.

"Poor old boy!" she murmured. "That setback we got today when we had it all fixed up was enough to make you feel sore and glum. Never mind; cheer up. You know what Jimsy says, 'Hard luck can give you an awful battle, but if you're on the square you can hand it a knockout punch some time.'"

It was no use, however. Joe's sulkiness had sunk in; his temper was vicious, deep and ingrowing, a temper such as she had never suspected in him, and all her petting, all her loving coaxing, could not wean him from it. She pressed her cheek more closely to his and fondled him, but he jerked away from her embrace and surlily sought another chair.

As he did so the bell rang from downstairs.

"I'll bet that's Jimsy now," he muttered.

Much hurt, but disguising her feelings, Emma hurried into the kitchen and pressed the button that opened the entrance door of the house.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]