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neath its daubs of grease, and he drew back a step.

"Well, you've spent your own time to an equal amount, so we'll let one expenditure balance the other."

"Oh, I'm a loafer. My time is of no account."

"I could not accept your money, sir."

The two looked at one another a moment, and seemed to understand, even though one gentleman wore the greasy clothes of a mechanic.

"I beg your pardon," said Stranleigh, softly. "There's a question, however, I would like to ask you. Have you given an option on this car device to anyone?"

Sterling glanced up in astonishment.

"Why, yes; I did give an option to an Englishman, but it ran out two months ago. By the way, you're English, too, aren't you?"

"I was born over there."

"This Englishman was n't your sort. He was a most plausible talker, and, as I told you, my judgment of men is sometimes at fault. I gave him an option for two months, but I think all he wanted was to get an automobile for nothing. He said he represented a syndicate of English capitalists, some of whom were in New York. He borrowed the only car I had completed at that time. Like the preacher, after the futile collection, I wanted to get back my hat at least, but I wrote letter after letter, and have never received any answer. It was n't worth while to set the police on his track, so I tried to forget him, and succeeded until you spoke of an option just now."

"The agreement with him lapsed?"

"Yes, quite two months ago!"

"Will you write out an option for me, for a week only? I'll pay you five hundred dollars now, to be forfeited if I fail to keep my promise."

"I'll give you the document with pleasure, but it isn't necessary to make a deposit."

"This is a business transaction, you know, Mr. Sterling. You are almost as bad a business man as I am. I don't know the law in America, but I think you will find that unless a deposit is made, your option would be invalid in a court of law. There must be value received, I believe, when a bargain is made."

"All right," said Sterling, laughing lightly, "but I'll hand you back your money if you regret the deal."

He went to a desk in the corner, and wrote out the agreement, in which he acknowledged the receipt of five hundred dollars. Stranleigh selected from his wallet five bills for a hundred dollars each, and handed them over, then bidding good morning to the engineer, he walked to his hotel, followed at a discreet distance by Mr. Wentworth Parkes.

HAVING located his quarry, Parkes retraced his steps to Woodbridge Street, deep in thought. His first resolution was to try bluster with Sterling, but he abandoned that idea for two reasons, each conclusive in its way. His acquaintance with the engineer had convinced him that while much could be done by persuasion, he would not yield to force, and secondly, Sterling had no money. Whatever gold was to be acquired must come from Lord Stranleigh. It was, therefore, an innocent lamb of a man who entered the machine shop of Woodbridge Street.

"Hello!" cried Sterling, who seemed taken aback. "What have you done with my motor?"

"Your automobile is here in Detroit; a little the worse for wear, perhaps, but there's nothing wrong that cannot be put right in short order."

Sterling stood thinking deeply, while Parkes continued: "The truth is, Mr. Sterling, I have been working night and day under very discouraging conditions. Until recently there was nothing hopeful to tell you, and the moment I struck a bit of luck, I came on here in the car to let you know. You see, if you possessed a

factory in going order, that I could have shown a man over, the company would have been a fact long ago." He paused a moment, regarding the other shrewdly. "I must admit I was surprised when I passed your shop an hour ago, to see standing in this window, you explaining the car to him, the very man on whom I depended. Put it down to my credit that instead of coming in, embarrassing him, and perhaps spoiling a deal by interference, I passed on."

Sterling was plainly nonplussed.

"I wish you had come in an hour earlier," he said. "You could n't have interfered; your option ran out some time ago."

"I know," said Parkes, regretfully, "but I thought my good work might have made up for the legal lapse. Indeed, Mr. Sterling, if you will allow me to say so, I had such faith in your honesty that I believed you would renew our arrangement."

"That's just the point," said Sterling. "Had you come in an hour sooner, you would have been in time. As it is, I have granted a new option to the man in the window."

"What name did he give you?"

"The name he mentioned was Henry Johnson."

Parkes laughed a little, then checked himself.

"He went under the name of Trevelyan in New York, but neither that nor Johnson is his true title. Well, is he going in with you?"

"He has asked for a week in which to decide."

Parkes laughed more heartily.

"In New York I took him for a ride in your motor, and there also he asked me for a week in which to decide. He seems to have taken the opportunity to come West, and forestall me."

"I don't believe he's that sort of man at all," cried Sterling, impatiently.

"Oh, well, perhaps I do him an injustice. I hope so, anyway. Of course, you're not compelled to show your hand, but I think, in the circumstances, you might let me know just how far you've got."

"Yes, I think you are entitled to that," said Sterling, slowly. "I remember now, I was astonished when I learned he knew I'd given a former option. However, I shall be greatly disappointed if he does n't run straight. He took an option for a week, and paid me five hundred dollars, to be forfeited if he does not exercise the option."

"Well, that certainly does look like running straight. Meanwhile, what are you to do?"

"I am to send the car to his hotel with a suitable chauffeur, at eleven o'clock tomorrow. He means to test it along the Canadian roads."

"Was anything said about the amount of capital he was prepared to put up?"

"No; he didn't get that far."

PARKES took a few turns up and down the room, then he said suddenly:

"Have you any particular chauffeur in mind?"

"No; I was just about to make arrangements."

"Well, you need n't go any further with them. I'll be your chauffeur! I can show off this car better than a stranger. It's to my interest, too, having spent so much time on it, to see the deal put through. Besides, I know your man, and he cannot deny that I sent him to your shop. I think he owes me a commission at least, for bringing you together. I realize, of course, that I have no legal claim, yet, I am sure, if the facts were proved, any court would allow me an agent's commission."

"I'll pay your commission," said Sterling.

"You have n't the money and he has."

Sterling thought deeply for some moments before he answered:

"I will let you go as chauffeur, but, I must inform him who you are."

Parkes shook his head.

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