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The God in the Car

(Continued from Page 5)

man is this Anson? Unreasonable, I suppose you consider him?"

"Strangely enough, I never met him."

"And yet you married his daughter?" asked Stranleigh, in astonishment.

"I was determined to take away the girl, whether I reformed the factory or not, and here you see where good-luck and the reverse mingled. When I arrived at Mr. Anson's factory, the old man was in New York, for the purpose of raising a loan, or of selling the property, neither of which projects was he able to carry out."

"That was his misfortune, rather than his fault, wasn't it?"

"In a way, yes; still, the Trust had offered him a reasonable figure for his factory. He not only refused, but fought the Trust tooth and nail, thinking that with low taxation and country wages, he could meet the competition, which, with the factory in its present state, he could not do. The fact that he was pitted against the Trust became well known, so he could neither borrow nor sell. While in New York he called on Langdon, Bliss and Co., the firm that employed me. When my report was read to him, he fell into a tremendous rage, and characterized our company as a body of swindlers. Mr. Langdon ordered him off the premises."

THAT was the first spoke in my wheel. Mr. Langdon, capable man, was always courteous and calm when dealing with his clients, so I judge that when he recovered from his outbreak, he regretted it extremely, and was inclined to blame me for muddling the affair of Anson's Mill. "I may say that I had been placed in a rather difficult position. The proprietor, Anson, was absent, and had not taken the foreman into his confidence, therefore this foreman put difficulties in my way. The employees were suspicious, not knowing what research by a stranger meant, so I went to Anson's residence, hoping to find there someone with sufficient authority to enable me to get the information I needed. "I met Mrs. Anson, a kindly woman, but realized that no authority had been delegated to her. She appeared afraid to suggest anything, and called in her only daughter to assist at our conference. The girl at once said she would accompany me to the mill, and did so. I shall never forget with what tact she won over the foreman; and it was quite evident the workmen all knew and liked her; her very presence appeared to dissipate distrust. I saw Miss Anson home, and as my work went on, conferences became more and more necessary. Well—you're a young man—and—you know how it is yourself."

"As a matter of fact, I don't," interjected Stranleigh, hurriedly, "but I can guess."

"We had no difficulty with Mrs. Anson, but both mother and daughter were uneasy about how the father would take it. I wrote what I hoped was a straightforward letter, putting the case to him as man to man. He answered with a terse letter that left me in no doubt regarding his opinion. It appeared that my letter had arrived at an unfortunate time: the day after he had been ordered out of our office. He at once forwarded my letter to Mr. Langdon, saying in effect: "This shows the sort of man you sent, like a wolf, to my home."

"Langdon telegraphed to know if this was true. I had to admit it was. The result was instant dismissal. Mr. Anson wrote a stinging letter to his daughter, saying she could do what she pleased about marrying me, but that he had got me flung out of my job. It's strange," Challis murmured reflectively, "that a father rarely recognizes, when he comes to a difference with his children, that he is meeting, in part at least, some of his

own characteristics. Well . . . We were married before the old man returned from New York," he concluded.

"Can you drive an automobile?" asked Stranleigh.

"Yes."

"The immediate question strikes me as being that of wearing apparel, which we must get from under the parental roof. Will you exchange seats, and drive me down to the mill?"

"It's a tough proposition," murmured Challis.

"A proposition usually gives way if you approach it tactfully. If you have never seen Mr. Anson, he will not recognize you, so let us call at the mill."

"He would n't recognize me, but the foreman would, also many of the men."

"We must chance that."

THE young men exchanged seats, and Challis at the wheel displayed more caution than ever Stranleigh used, sending the car spinning down the slightly descending road by the margin of the lake, until they came to the water level. No word was spoken between them, but his lordship studied with keen scrutiny, from the corner of his eye, the profile of the intent young driver. He was immensely taken with him, and meditated on the story to which he had listened. The effect left on his mind by the recital astonished him. It was that of gentle sympathy with the old man who acted so obstreperously, and lost his daughter. Gradually he placed this feeling to the credit of Challis, who had shown no rancor against his father-in-law, either in word or tone. Yes; he liked Challis, and was sorry for the older man, too; battling against forces too strong for him, stubbornly clinging to antiquated methods in a world that had outgrown them. These two men should be pulling together.

"There's the factory," said Challis, at last; and Stranleigh, looking up, beheld further down the valley a three-storied structure, unexpectedly large, built apparently for all the ages. There was no sign of activity about it, but the roar of waters came to their ears; idle waters that were turning no wheels.

"By Jove!" cried Stranleigh, jumping out as the car stopped.

Challis said nothing, but an expression of deep anxiety darkened his countenance. There were plastered here and there on the stone walls great white posters, with headings prominent as those of a sensational newspaper.

AUCTION SALE

By Order of the Bankruptcy Court Etc., Etc.

"A desirable property," said Challis, ruefully, "which nobody desires except the Trust, and probably it cares nothing about it now."

"You forget that it is desired by Stanmore Anson," said Stranleigh.

"I'm sorry, but I feared this was inevitable," remarked Challis.

Stranleigh looked up at him.

"Could you make this factory pay, if it were given into your charge?"

"Not in its present condition."

"I mean, of course, with your recommendations carried out. If the mill, free from all encumbrances, filled with modern machinery, rightly placed, were put under your management, could you make it pay?"

Challis seemed to be making some mental calculations.

"There would need to be a certain amount of working capital—"

"Yes, yes; that is understood. Could you make it pay?" insisted his lordship.

"I am sure I could, but, of course, there is always that incalculable factor—the opposition of the Trust." "Oh, damn the Trust!" cried Stranleigh. "I beg your pardon: I should have said, blow the Trust! I thought I had lost the power of being ex-