## The Ambition of Mark Truitt

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HENRY RUSSELL MILLER

in which he could congratulate himself

on having avoided a serious blunder.

Not many months later he by chance

met Piotr, who conveyed the news that

Kazia had married Whiting. Plotr's

manner of parration implied that,

though Whiting was a poor refuge,

Kazia had been fortunate to escape

Mark. He seemed disappointed that

Mark's letters to Unity had contin-

ued, at erratic intervals. Soon her re-

plies, too, began to dwindle in number

much to lose in the way of intensity.

And then he sent a letter that she

failed to answer at all, leaving their

love affair suspended, so to speak, in

the air. One of Simon's rare and mis-

spelled missives informed Mark that

she was, in the phrase Bethel used,

keeping company with one Slocum, a

prosperous young farmer of the vicin-

ity. This may hardly be researded as

poetic retribution. It caused Mark a

few days' surface indignation and a

secret relief; one can not feel deeply

the loss of a shadow, even though one

Kazia married; Unity, having jilted

him, keeping company with plodding

Bill Slocum! His tragedy had ended

in sheer farce. We do well, he con-

cluded, not to take our dramas too

. . . . . .

An amazing thing happened one day.

There was the sound of a quick un-

familiar tread in the corridor, the door

was pushed briskly open and into the

"How are you, Truitt?" he inquired,

'Well enough, I guess," Mark re-

"Good!" said Henley. "Your father,

presume?" He nodded toward Simon

Mark made the necessary introduc-

tions. Simon said: "Pleased to meet

ye," and flushed for his son, who had

Toward the other visitor Henley

"Ah! Doctor Courtney! Do you hap-

"I happen to," answered Courtney,

"I remember now, it was you who

sent this young man to me. I," said

The preacher's shadowy smile ap-

Henley laughed pleasantly. "I fancy

"I'm Going Back-Home."

Courtney pushed their chairs back

from the bedside, that the great man

"When," Henley asked, "do you ex-

Mark winced and returned to the

The pause and the slight emphasis

on the last word were not lost on Hen-

ley; a suspicion as to their import

"Exactly right!" he exclaimed heart

ily. "Stay as long as necessary to get

your strength together. You're too

valuable a man to take chances. Your

job will wait for you. By the way,

about that new charging machine you

pose the plans aren't where we can lay

your hands on them. They're in my

"An excellent place to keep 'em,

Henley agreed. "Suppose then, when

you're feeling up to it, I send one of

our engineers after you to go over the

the idea, we ought to install the ma-

"You can send him, if you want to.

But I won't go over the plans with

him." Mark discouraged the sugges-

Henley stiffened. "I'm not in the

sullenness that was becoming his

habit. "I'm going back-home."

Doctor Courtney."

stirred. But:

head."

our hands on them?"

chines before winter."

He turned to Mark.

pect to come back to us?"

might hold the stage.

who did not share Simon's shyness.

glanced uncertainly a moment, then

pen to remember me?" The question,

had to own up to the relationship.

obviously, was in playful irony.

shaking hands. "I was going by, had

a few minutes and ran up to find out

room stepped Thomas Henley.

plied out of his amazement.

has paid a price for her.

seriously.

for myself."

held out a hand.

peared. "Is he?"

his auditor showed no deep emotion.

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SYNOPSIS.

Mark Truitt, encouraged by his sweettheart, Unity Martin, leaves Hetnel, his
mative 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 of 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
hecomes a boarder in Roman's home and
assists Plotr. 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. Heavy work in
the intense heat of the furnace causes
Mark to collapse and Kazia cares for
him. Later Roman also succumbs and
Mark gets his job. Roman resents this
and tells Mark to find another boarding
place.

## CHAPTER X.

Wounded on the Field.

The accident was one that happened often. Occasionally, after a tap, water would be turned into the cinder pit that the cooling slag might harden and be broken without delay. Not seldom the water would be conveyed under the crust, come into contact with the still molten slag and be converted suddenly into steam. Then there would be an explosion. Men might be seriously injured, or even killed, which was very sad-but one of the hazards of the employment. It happened when Mark had been following his straight road ahead for more than five years.

Five years during which he had won success, substantial if not brilliant! The lack of brilliancy might have been disputed by those few who knew that sundry labor-saving devices installed in the Quinby mills during this period were of his invention.

When Henley heard of the accident he frowned; Henley detested accidents, which spoke of inefficiency somewhere. But when the information was added that the foreman of the open-hearth battery was among the injured, he said: "Damn!" and in person at once called the hospital and his own physician by telephone and through these agencies commandeered the best surgical skill and care for that valuable workman.

The doctors gathered in solemn conclave and did various things to Mark's shattered body. They dogged his steps into the very shadow of death and would not let him die. They did that, knowing they condemned him to a life of pain, and having the security of Thomas Henley's word that Henley graciously, "am in your debt." their bills should each and every one of them be paid.

While Mark still lingered in the vale of mystery that leads to full knowl- he is. And I have a notion the debt edge, two men began their daily-and nightly-watches. One was a thin faded man who wore the rusty black of the country preacher. The other was an awkward, gray little man who would sit motionless by the hour, never taking his eyes from the still form under the white sheet.

Mark did not die. His broken body began slowly to mend. He passed out of immediate danger; he was even allowed to talk and to be talked to a little. But in the manner of the nurses, of his visitors from Bethel, even of the calloused doctors, were a grave gentieness, an absence of the exultation to be expected after triumph over death. He felt it.

He put his question to his father. "What are they keeping back from

Simon's glance did not waver, nor did he try to evade with a soothing "Ye'll never walk easy again Ye'll have to use a crutch, leastways a cane, always."

"It's my hip?"

"Is that all?"

"Ye were hurt innardly. Ye'll have to be careful always. No more work in the mills."

Mark closed his eyes, uttering no complaint. But within was a turmoil of protest and rebellion. A cripple, a partial invalid for life! Half a man! So had ended the dreamed campaign of conquest. Tears of futile rage eeped out through his closed eyelids.

His recovery was slow and very painful; six years of driving ahead at top speed had left him but little reserve vitality for the emergency. The mood of rebellion died down from sheer exhaustion. He accepted his misfortune; but sullenly, with no swelling heroic resolve to defy untoward circumstance.

There was no conscious desire to return to the mills from which he had been banished. They were too much the object of his smoldering resentment just then. He felt toward them as the betrayed toward the traitor.

"I think," he said once to Simon and Richard Courtney, who had not yet left the city, "I'll go back to Bethel." "It will be a good place to recuper

ate," said the preacher. "But I mean to stay."

"We shall be glad to have you back." Thoughts of Bethel naturally revived the memory of Unity Martin. Mark found a certain grim humor in the recollection.

He had had his period of tragic remorse for Kazla. He had not, however, let conscience push to the extreme of disturbing the fixed destiny tion. just mentioned. Nor was he long in attaining a comparative peace of mind | business of stealing inventious."

pect you to be business-like. Just what do you mean by that 'if'?" "I mean I'm through with the mills." "Who," Henley's glance swept Simon and Richard Courtney sharply, "who has been putting fool ideas into your

put the idea in shape."

head?" "You, for one, when you come here because I'm a valuable man, not because I'm a man. Would you come to see me if I hadn't a new invention in mind?"

Henley waved a hand to intimate

that allowance must be made for an

invalid's humors. "Of course, we ex-

"Nonsense! You're sick, that's all." Henley smiled kindly but confidently. "I've seen men in your case before. You think you won't come back. But you will. Why? Because you're a valuable man-I stick to that. You've a genius for mechanics, you know how to bandle men and you've got a sense of organization. Most men would think themselves lucky if they had any one and in length; they had never had of those. What does it mean? That you fit in here, of course. And when a man fits into any kind of life, he can no more keep away than molten steel can avoid the shape of the mold. And -you'll find it so-there's something about our business that gets into the bone and blood of a man." He looked at his watch and rose abruptly. "Glad you're getting along. Don't forget, your job is waiting for you."

"But you don't seem to understand," Mark cried. "I'm done for. I'll have to go on a cane, maybe a crutch, all my life. And the doctors say, no hard work at all."

Henley could be very human, when he chose, "Ah!" he said gently. "I had not heard that. I'm sorry. It makes a difference, of course."

It is possible that Henley was not thinking of Mark's commercial value, as he stood looking searchingly down at the querulous patient.

Unexpectedly he leaned forward a little. From his eyes a commanding flash leaped. He put out a hand and caught one of Mark's strongly.

"Your brains don't need a crutch, do they? It isn't brute strength that makes you valuable we can buy that cheap. You said something about being a man. Now's your chance to be one. What's a little thing like a crutch or a doctor's prohibition? The measure of a man is what he overcomes. Go home and rest, get your nerve together. And when you're ready, let me know. I'll find a place for you."

He was gone. And there was Mark, who had just been weakly if resentfully accepting defeat, athrill like a war-horse that has heard the bugle call.

## CHAPTER XI.

The Measure of a Man. When he met Unity again, he had been in Bethel for more than two

He had started out for the morning turn on his crutches, to test his returning strength, and before he quite realized it the village lay behind him. He swung along for some two hundred yards farther; then let himself carefully down on the roadside. He sat there for a long time, baring

his head to the summer sunshine. "This is very good indeed!" would have been almost flawless but for one thing-he was rather lonely; he felt the need for some one to share

the day with him. He had his wish. Down the valley road appeared a buggy drawn by a lazy heavy-footed horse of the sort distinguished as "safe for women." From within the buggy Mark caught the gleam of a white shirtwaist and a sailor hat. Even before the vehicle drew near enough for recognition, he

knew the passenger for Unity. A slight tremor passed over him. To meet the embodiment of a shadow by whom one has been illted-or whom one has jilted?—is at least mildly ex-

A slight tightening of the reins was sufficient to stop that horse.

"Hello, Unity!" Mark felt that this greeting fell short of the dramatic proprieties.

"Oh! How do you do?" she answered colorlessly. will grow. I am finishing your job, There was a moment of silence dur-

ing which, without seeming to do so, they inspected each other.

Mark had a twinge of disappointment. This was not the Unity he had loved so boyishly-and so briefly. She was as pretty as ever, in a way even prettier; but one could hardly have thought of her as spirituelle. Her face was fuller, its color deeper, and there was a healthy roundness in the line of shoulder and breast, of the ankle that protruded from under the dustrobe. Not that she was fat! But her daintiness was gone. In the item of dress she would have suffered from comparison with the young ladies of his boarding house. Her hair was done carelessly. And vivacity had gone the way of daintiness. She had the air of having settled into the habit of spoke of before the accident; I sup-Bethel, of having accepted its narrow outlook. A faint vertical line between her eyes hinted that she might not "No," answered Mark, "you can't lay

have accepted it with complacency. Therefore he said: "You look the same as ever, Unity.'

She brightened a little. "You think There was something almost pitiful to him in the way she caught at the remark. She became spiritless plans with you? If there's anything in again. "But, of course, that isn't

"But, of course, it is." She laughed unpleasantly. "You wouldn't think so, if you saw the way they treat me here now."

"The men? Surely not!" She shrugged her shoulders. "No.

"I'll see that you don't steal this," Mark responded ungraciously. "Be-And when they haven't anything else cause, when you pay for it, you've got to gossip about, they talk about how

to pay for this, too." He put a hand I'm settling into an old maid." on the injured hip. "That is, if I ever "Isn't that what the rhetoric "Isn't that what the rhetorics used to call hyperbole? It should be sparingly used. Besides I hear you have

> "Oh! him!" With another shrug. 'He's afraid I'm not a good cook." "That's a nice way to talk about a lover! Especially," he laughed self- from the poets-is love's poor relation.

consciously, "since you threw me over He almost missed the acid look she

flashed at him. "It broke your heart, of course!" "I've had pleasanter experiences," he sald dryly, "Why didn't you answer

my last letter, Unity?" Her indifference might have been a little too well done. "For one thing, even I have a little pride. It was easy to see you'd got tired of me. Not that I cared! Those boy-and-girl af-



He Was Still Resting on His Grassy Bank When the Slow-Going Vehicle Reappeard.

fairs always die a natural death. There was another girl, wasn't there?" "Why, I believe so. In fact, there

was. I gave her up for you." "And I gave you up. You must have thought," again her unpleasant laugh

rang, "you'd made a poor bargain all round. Or had a lucky escape!" "I did," he answered grimly, leaving her to construe the answer as she

chose. "That's an easy conundrum." She gathered up the reins. "Well, I must

be going. We're harvesting now and I have to get back in time to help get dinner. Good-by.' She drove on, as casually as if they

had been neighbors in the habit of meeting daily. . . . And this was their first meeting after six years. He leaned back on his grassy bank,

having found, if not a companion, at least food for reflection. He was still resting on his grassy

bank when, an hour later, the slow- to peer closely to make out her look going vehicle reappeared. With difficulty-for he had not yet become expert, with his crutches he rose and stood in the middle of the road. The horse, without urging, stopped with its nose against him. A more skilled observer than Mark might have noticed that some villager's mirror and comb had been utilized to the advantage of not." Unity's hair and that her hat had been readjusted to its most becoming angle; and would have drawn certain inferences.

Mark did not. He merely smiled at her over the horse's head. She seemed rather impatient with

his obstructiveness. "You've bought the pike, then? I hadn't heard." He laughed and waved his hand airily. "This morning the world is mine.

Do you know, we haven't shaken hands?" "Oh, haven't we?" Her tone attached no importance to the omission.

Nevertheless, when he stood aside, she drove the horse forward a length and laid a limp hand in Mark's. "Also," he continued, "you haven't

said you're sorry that I was hurt." "Oh!" she repeated, with perfunc toriness unrelieved, "I'm sorry." He laughed again. "You needn't

mind now. You'll have plenty of chances before long." "Meaning?"

"The road to your house is still open to the public, isn't it? I'm thinking of buying a new horse. Unity," he returned to gravity, "there isn't any reason why we shouldn't be good friends, is there?"

"People will talk." He paraphrased a classic formula. Unity," he said earnestly, "drat the people!"

"You can say that. You don't have to stay here." "But I'm going to stay here."

"Not for good?"

"For good." "Why?"

Mark laughed shortly. "When you're put out of the race, you don't want to stay where you have to watch the others still running."

She inspected him again, more closely. He thought he was sincere. But he did not know that despite the crutches and his drawn white face he had not the resigned dispirited air of the man who has accepted a permanent seat on the shelf.

"Look as long as you want to," he suggested at last. "In the meantimewill you set the dogs on me when I drive down your way?"

"Oh, well!" She tried unsuccessreally want to come-! It's been a never said much about it." dull season. I suppose it would be a

and they don't giggle behind my back. tongues a chance to clack once more." She drew the reins taut,

"A real philanthropy," he assented, grinning, as the horse lumberingly resumed its journey.

Mark swung slowly along homeward. He smiled pityingly. He had read aright the new interest in Unity's face -that of the condemned prisoner who has heard rumor of reprieve. He was sorry for her. And pity-we have it

Mark regained a measure of strength. He discarded one crutch and began each day to take a few steps experimentally with no support but a cane. He spent many beautiful idle hours, alone or with Richard Courtney, driving his new horse among the hills.

Sometimes-often-Unity was with him on these drives. Tongues clacked according to prophecy. But Mark did not care. And Unity did not care.

Mark fell placidly and easily in love with Unity again. At least, the while protesting, he decided that it must be

But the protest was half-hearted. He wanted to love.

"Are ye goin' to stay here in Bethel?" Simon broke a long silence to inquire, one rainy evening.

"I don't know," Mark answered out of a brown study, off his guard. But | it? he added quickly: "Yes, I do know. I'm going to stay."

"Then, what are ye goin' to do?" "I don't need to do anything. I've got twenty thousand dollars. That'll last me-in Bethel."

Simon shook his head gravely. "Ye can't stand that. Ye've got to do chief joy in yielding. somethin'. An' there's nothin' to do here-yet."

"And never will be." Mebby not. All the more reason why that Mister Henley's right."

"Would you have me go back to

"Yes." "You don't know what you're saying," Mark began irritably. "I could never take a pen pusher's job. 'The mills are all I know. And that lifeyou don't know it. It costs too much. It takes it out of you, drives you like a slave. It-I'm not fit for it now. It-oh, let's not talk about it."

But Simon had more than one of Mark's problems on his mind. "Are ye," he went on, "goin' to marry Unity Martin?"

"I don't know. I suppose so." "If ye don't find out purty soon," remarked Simon most surprisingly, 'she'il do your knowin' fur ye. I wouldn't."

Mark stopped at a window, looking frowningly out at the sheets of rain that dashed across the square of light. Simon must have felt deeply on the subject, for he repeated, "I wouldn't."

"No," said Mark testily, "I suppose you wouldn't I don't know. But if I do it, it will be with my eyes open." Which seems a most unlover-like say-

There was an evening when he was alone with Unity on Squire Martin's front porch. It was one of the soft languorous nights that sometimes come to Bethel in early September. They talked little and that in low tones.

Once he leaned toward her. He had

"Do you know," he remarked, "you ought to be glad I came back?"

"Indeed! And why?" "Have you looked in the mirror lately? When I first came you looked -well, cranky and as though you didn't care whether school kept or

"Well, of all the conceit! I suppose you take all the credit." Thus she admitted certain improvements. "And why not?" he laughed lazily. When you come right down to it Unity, you never really, definitely

threw me over." "It isn't too late.

"Yes, it is too late." She said nothing. But when he reached up to take her hand he found it a tightly clenched little ball.

Unity, do you remember the drive we took that Sunday before I went to the city?"

"I think I do."

"She thinks she does!" he apostrophized the night. "I have a scheme. Tomorrow, right after dinner, I'm going to drive down here for you. Unity, let's have the Sunday over againin every particular."

Again she was silent, "You don't agree?"

"I-I'm not sure."

to marry you."

"That you love me?" She shook her head. "That I want

But when he drew her down and kissed her, she did not resist, "Wait," he whispered fatuously, "until tomorrow. Then you will be convinced. Although what virtue the morrow would hold he did not say. He prob-

ably did not guess. Unity did not scruple to change the current of another's life; she saw no occasion for scruples. She thought she loved Mark. But she did not believe his expressed resolve to stay in Bethel was, could be, genuine; or, if genuine, that its execution would be good for him. And, principally--she knew ex-

actly what she wanted. Next day they drove over much the same road they had taken seven years before. They chatted in lighter vein, with intervals of eloquent silence. On a tilltop whence they could see only other hills and the sinking sun they pled beggar accosted them. Henley ate the lunch put up by the thoughtful ignored him. Mark slyly gave him a Susan. Then they waited to watch the sunset.

"Unity, what must I do to convince

you? "Nothing," she murmured

He considered his happiness. And after a while she said: "Tell fully to return to indifference. "If you | me about your life in the city. You've

Innocent demand! Not in vain is The women. They're so friendly now mercy to the gossips to give their the trap set in the sight of a young

man in love. He began to describe the mills to her. And as he went on, into his words crept the unconscious eloquence of a real enthusiasm. His face became eager. Before he had ended, he was on his feet declaiming to her, who was a very attentive audience. He saw what he described.

"Ah!" she breathed, as he reached a period. "What a life! And yc could leave it?"

"You forget," he reminded her, "I was put out of it."

She leaned forward suddenly, resting her hand on the one that held the cane. "Mark, why don't you go back

He jerked his hand free, as if he had felt a twinge of pain. "Don't suggest that, Unity!" he cried. "There's that other side. It's hard and cruel and narrowing. It eats up all the best of you. Sometimes it kills you. It makes you a machine, not your own man. I used to feel it when I was there, sometimes terribly. Here I see it from a distance and I understand better. It's just one hellish scramble, that life-" He stopped abruptly, with an impatient gesture.

'If I go back, Unity, you won't-" But how could be phrase his fear or interpret the hot surging that drowned

She sighed happily.

He was soon to learn. A man and a woman entered into the most trying of human relations. Both were young, but both had hardened in the pursuit of selfish desire. Neither had the love that finds its

## CHAPTER XII.

A Man and His Wife. In the down-town offices of the Quinby company and in the particular

room which may be called the headquarters of the Quinby army, two men were sitting late one winter afternoon. The one was Henley himself, now chairman of the company, a bit stouter than when we first met him twelve years ago, his arrogance a little less evident in manner albeit time had not altered the fact. The other was a youngish man whose thin bony face and hands and streaks of premature

gray hair spoke of physical frailty. It was common knowledge in the Quinby company that no one was more welcome in Henley's office than the young superintendent whom the master's influence had put in command of the big new open-nearth plant. It was even suspected that Henley had taken Truitt in with him

in his speculations. At the end of a long discussion a company affairs Henley pressed a but ton. His secretary appeared from the adjoining office.

"Bring in the light and heat ac

count." The secretary returned with the ac count of the latest successful specula tion. Henley gave it a rapid glance and handed it to Mark. The latter studied it carefully, questioned certain items, questioned the explanation any finally accepted them. Henley smiles



At the Door a Crippled Beggar Ac costed Them.

again. He knew men who would have hesitated to question his accounts. Everything he knew of Truitt he liked. "Make out Mr. Truitt's check." he directed the secretary, who withdrew and promptly returned. Henley signed the check and deliv-

ered it to Mark. The latter receipted the accompanying voucher. "I've another thing in mind," Hen-

ley suggested. "Care to go in?" Mark hesitated, his brow suddenly wrinkling. "I think not," he said at last. The note of irritation did not escape Henley. "I've my eye on a new

"I thought you were pretty comfortably fixed."

Mark shrugged his shoulders. "It seems the neighborhood leaves something to be desired."

"Yes? I see," Henley indicated Mark's heavy furred overcoat, "you're driving out. You can take me home -unless you're in a hurry to reach that delinquent neighborhood?"

A quarter of an hour later the two men emerged from the corridor of the Quinby building. At the door a cripcoin.

A beautifully matched team of blacks harnessed to a light sleigh awaited him. Evidently Mark had not forgotten his early knowledge of horse flesh. Only a man whom fortune had kissed could have afforded such horses. For Mark-with his "leg and a half"-they were hardly an extravagance, almost

(TO BE CONTINUED.)